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2 BOOKS 2  
AND HOW <sup>TO</sup> USE THEM.  
VAN DYKE

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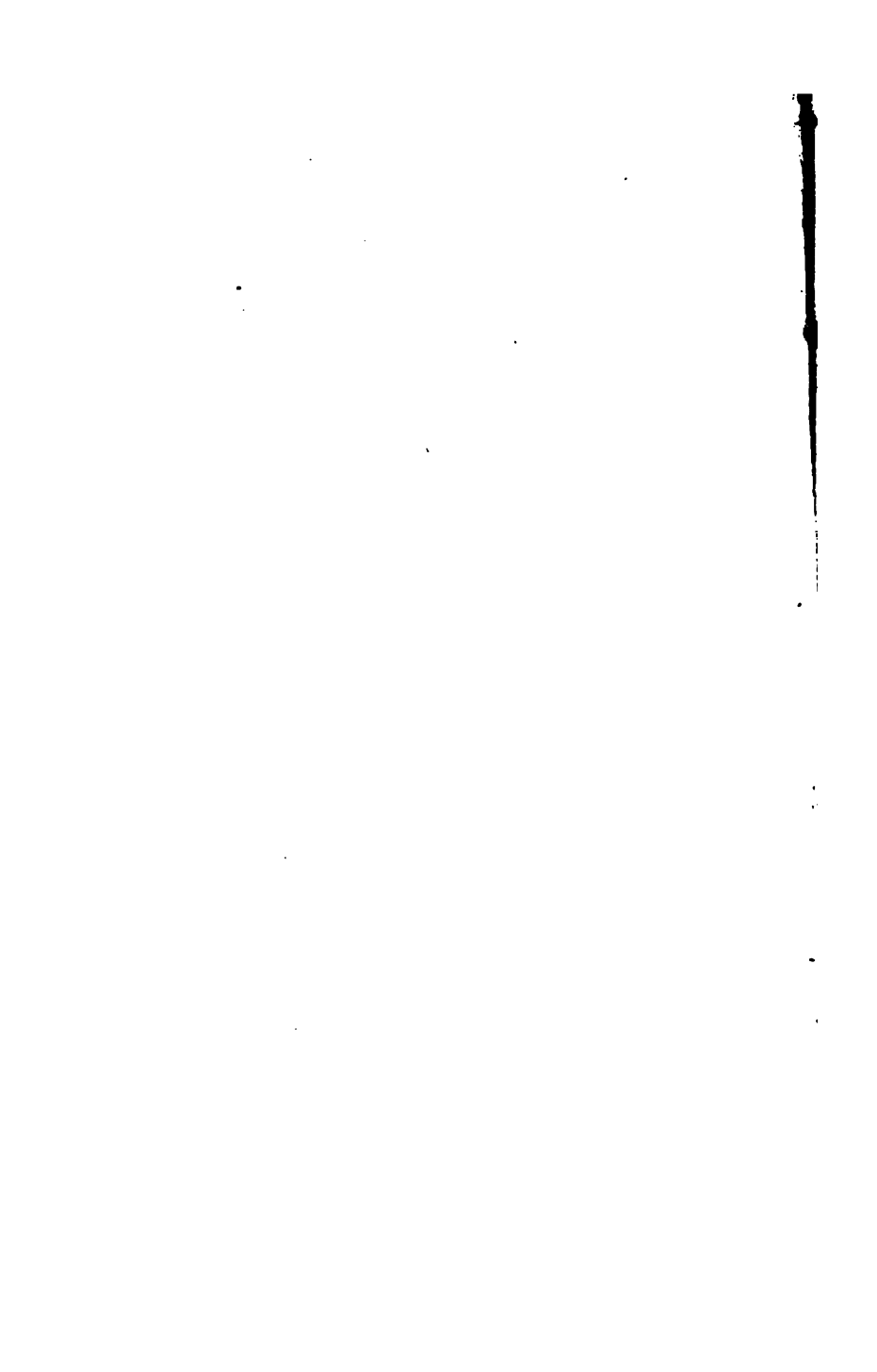
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# BOOKS

AND

## HOW TO USE THEM.

*Some Hints to Readers and Students.*

BY  
J. C. VAN DYKE.



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FORDS, HOWARD, AND HULBERT.  
1883.

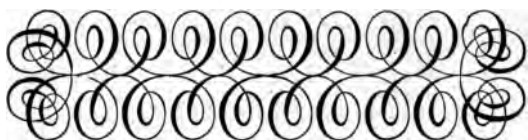


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## PREFACE.

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No apology whatever is offered for the production of this book. If it is bad, apologies can not perpetuate its existence ; and, if it is good, it does not need them. The subject of books and reading is not a new one. Many men, and some of prominence, have written on the subject, and that, too, so thoroughly that it seems almost like presumption to attempt the saying of any thing new or original. These men, in their various treatises, have correctly stated the rules of reading and the selection of books ; and I can only hope, by following in their footsteps, to point out occasionally some exception to a rule that has been passed over unnoticed, or to elaborate a too general statement. Beginners in all branches of knowledge require nothing so much as practical illustration of fundamental theories ; and this mode of teaching, rarely met with in books, I have attempted to introduce here.

In the preparation of these chapters, I have endeavored to present a manual for students ; and for that purpose I have limited the size, left out much exterior material, and have confined myself almost exclusively to the subject of "How to Read" and "What to Read," with a chapter on "Bibliography," and one on "The Public Library, and How to Use it." These last two chapters will be found comparatively new, and, I trust, instructive to the student.

The style in which I have treated the subject may be open to objection. I have written the book for youth, not age ; and, if its style is a youthful one, it but fulfills its author's design. In collecting the material of these chapters, I have used books wherever I could, and have been, perhaps unnecessarily, particular in giving credit therefor. "Books are made from books ;" and it is said to require "as much genius to appropriate an idea as it does to conceive one." I am somewhat indebted to Professor Phelps's homiletical work, entitled *Men and Books*.

J. C. VAN DYKE.

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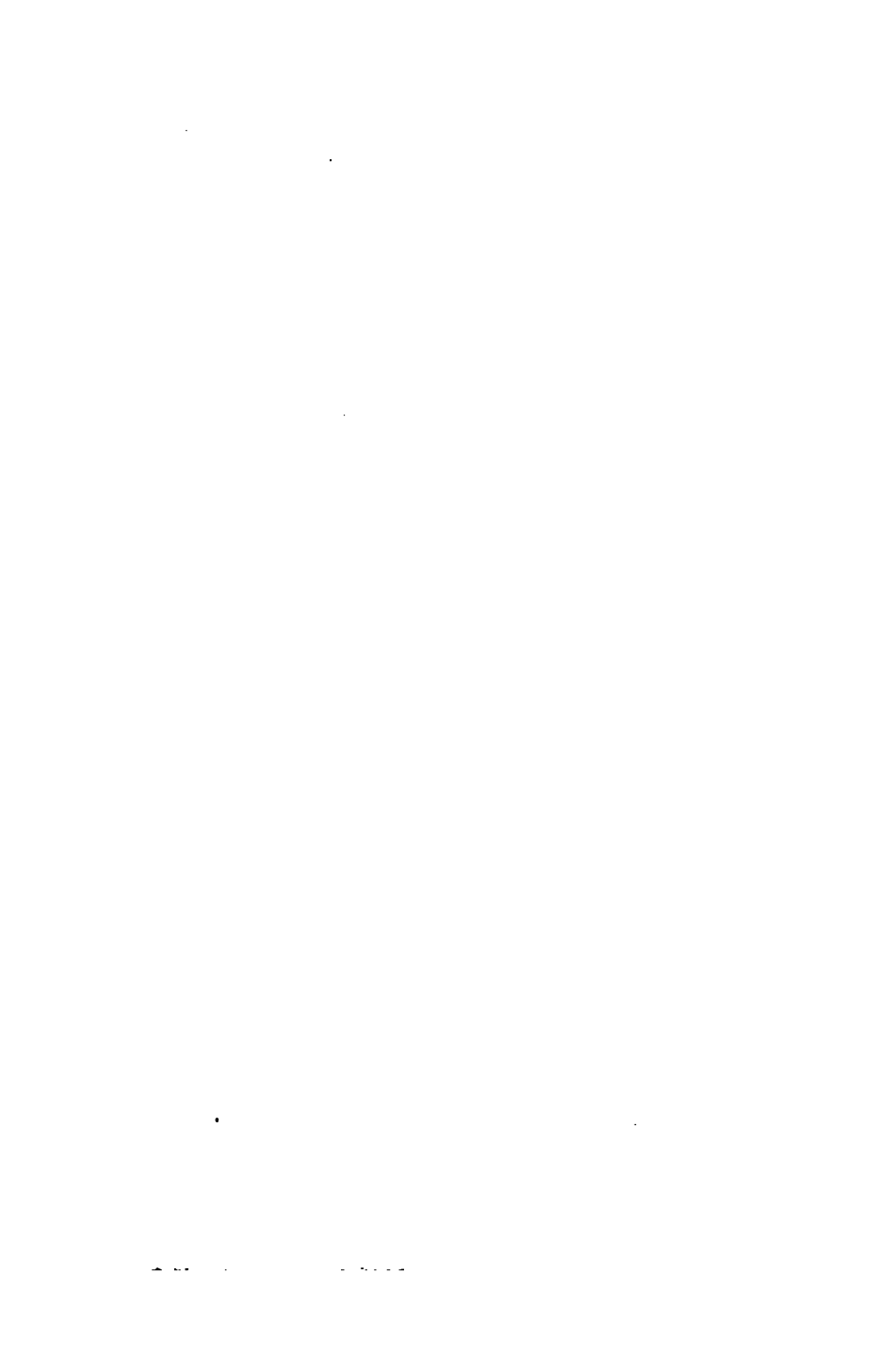
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*"Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible, solitary, impatient of interruption, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom-friend is here written out to us, the strangers of another age."* — EMERSON, on Books.





## BOOKS AND HOW TO USE THEM.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### BOOKS AND WISDOM.

"Without books, God is silent, justice dormant, natural science at a stand, philosophy lame, letters dumb, and all things involved in Cimmerian darkness." — BARTHOLIN.

I. THE true philosopher's stone, that by its magical touch converts existence into a golden success, is Knowledge. Be that knowledge what it may, so that it be adapted to the epoch, the surroundings, and the people, it will surely place its possessor in the front ranks of men.

In this age of the world, when men are leading neither an animal nor a material existence, but an intellectual existence, the secret of success is a knowledge of intellectual things. This is the king's daughter for whom the youth of to-day stake their hopes in entering the race.



She it is who is ever ahead on the course. She it is who ever, with alluring smile, beckons on the weary. *She* it is, who, when they come too near, throws down some golden apple of pleasure to divert their attention. She it is, smiling and delusive, worthy of a prince's ardor, apparently within reach, yet rarely to be caught.

The fabled Atalanta is not more shy and fleeting than is this much-wished-for knowledge that all strive after, and few obtain. Worthy of youth's best endeavors, it is caught only by those who persevere, and spend their lives in the pursuit. There is no easy method of obtaining knowledge. You can not distill it from your own individual and unaided thought ; nor can it be obtained by observation, or gathered by experience alone. There is but one true way, and that is a hard, wearisome one ; for it is only by comparison of your thought, observation, and experience, with the thoughts, observations, and experiences of many men, through the medium of books, that you are enabled to gain true wisdom. These books — the inherited treasures of the ages — are the guides, teachers, instructors, educators. From them alone more can be gained than from all the rest of creation combined ; for they alone contain all things that mankind has thus far gained : and nothing, from creation's dawn down to the

present time, has ever been effectively thought, done, or said, but what has found its record in their pages.

The youthful thinker, priding himself on his originality of thought and development of ideas, who goes forth in the presence of nature, and alone reasons out of his surroundings some truth of natural law, or conclusion of subtile analysis, will be very apt to imagine such truth or conclusion to be peculiarly his own discovery. But, before he claims recognition of his discovery, let him grope through the pages of books, lest among these records of the past he find all that his thought has ever conceived, merged into grander conceptions, and molded to higher purposes, than he ever aspired to. He will probably find that the idea he has seemingly originated was discovered and recorded years before. From the book containing the passage "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," down to the most puerile novel of the day, all is but one universal encyclopedia of history, recording thoughts and things in all times and in all places. You may trace the stars in the heaven above, and travel the face of the earth beneath, and plunge into the depths of the waters under the earth; but the literature of the astronomer, the traveler, and the naturalist, will have forestalled most of the discov-

eries you may make. True it is that discovery is never weary, and something comparatively new greets our eye each day ; but, even in this keenly inquisitive age, literature keeps abreast of discovery, and, like the recording angel of the skies, jots down the deeds of men as soon as they are done.

II. Not only is the knowledge contained in books universal and unbounded in its scope, but that knowledge is immortal.

“There is no past, so long as books shall live.”

The ages do but accumulate one upon another, and only the grosser parts perish. The fire, the soul of life, — the sparkling thought, — immortal and immutable, still lives within the pages of books.

The ancient belief that in each man's mind existed a shining star of light, — the soul, — and that when death came the star sprang forth and joined the glittering hosts of heaven, finds a fit likeness in the death of ages ; for from the darkness of material death springs forth the star of thought and learning existent through all time. The Assyrian monarchs, whose best boasts were the stones recording, “On this spot the King slew ten thousand of his enemies,” have perished ; and the Tigris and Euphrates,

once tinged by the blood of those "enemies," have been purified by centuries of peace: but the record of that brazen age of kings and subjects lives in the cuneiform writings graven in books of stone on pages of brick. The splendor of Rameses the Great, the Theban Rameseum and its splendid architecture, have been almost entirely swept away; but the poems of Pentaur the poet remain with us on the rolls of the Egyptian papyri. The great of old have gone,—the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets,—and no man knoweth their resting-place unto this day; yet from the beginning, through barbarism into civilization and Christianity, come down to us the Commandments on tablets of stone, and all the laws that hang thereon. Achilles, Agamemnon, Paris, Helen, have passed away; the very plain of Troy, and even the great Homer himself, have been doubted: but the *Iliad* still lives. And so I quote again,—

"There is no past, so long as books shall live."

These historians and chroniclers of the ages are the connecting-links of all time; and, as the shifting scenes of a panorama bring different views to our sight, so the long procession of all thoughts, themes, actions, men, will pass before us by the simple turning of the leaves of books.

III. And what are our personal relations to these historians of mankind, and what are the benefits we derive from their association? May not the book that contains knowledge for all men be the guide, philosopher, and friend of the individual man? And what better friends can we possibly have than the pages of books? And what a flattering recognition and attention from the great men of all ages have these friends met with! How they have been cherished in the heart through sorrow and gladness, through prosperity and adversity, through youth and age! They are suitable for all moods and all fancies: for, if we are sorrowful, there will be found many books written in sorrow to bear us company; and, if we are rejoicing, there will be found many books to laugh and rejoice with us. For youth, will be found the book of youth; and for age, will be found the book of age.

These friends that from the library-shelves have watched our infancy expand to youth, and followed our youth to manhood, are generally the objects of our indifference or contempt at first. Like Aladdin's lamp, their wonderful potency is unknown; and they may even be tumbled and tossed about in the garret, until some day a chance rub summons before us the Genie of Knowledge. How quickly then is the talisman transferred from the garret to the bosom, where

it is treasured as a priceless jewel! The friendship for books generally begins with an appreciation of the power of knowledge, and books as the repositories of that knowledge. They command our thoughts, and we respect them; respect is the parent of love, and we love them; the essence of love is possession, and we possess them; and they are loves more faithful than are those professing far more. They do not change, nor do they fade or wither; and that which they are to us in early youth is still the same in old age. Petrarch found them faithful when princes and court beauties had proven false. His latter life was devoted entirely to their society. Indeed, one morning he was found dead in his library at Arquà, seated at a table, with his elbow resting on the open page of a book. The love of Gibbon for these friends, formed early in life, was unfaltering. He was accustomed to speak of his library as his "seraglio of beauties." Dr. Maurice was so enamored of them that he wrote a whole volume on their friendship, maintaining a personal acquaintance with each author in the pages of his book.<sup>1</sup> For years, Richelieu scarcely slept, that he might indulge his passion for books. The day was spent in state affairs, and the night was passed in the company of his "friends." When

<sup>1</sup> *Friendship of Books*, by F. D. Maurice.

Shelley's body was recovered after the fatal storm off Leghorn, in his coat-pocket was found his well-beloved and inseparable *Æschylus*. The great Plato was found dead with the *Mimes* of Sophron under his pillow. Bacon speaks of books as "true friends that will neither flatter nor dissemble;" and Ben Jonson, in an address to a friend, says, —

"Then do I love thee, and behold thy ends  
In making thy friends books, and thy books friends."

Literary biography is crowded with instance upon instance of the great men whose ruling passion has been their love of books; and the benefits they have derived from that passion and its association are evidenced to a great extent in the simple fact of their being great men.

IV. But books are not alone the friends of mankind, in whose society we take great pleasure. Like true friends, they are guides, philosophers, and instructors. Never a pedagogue tutored the mind of youth so faithfully, patiently, unselfishly, and kindly, as the open pages of a book. They await the pace of each reader's intellect, and adapt themselves to its capacity.<sup>1</sup> Is the reader a dunce, — they explain the text again and again; they repeat, and go

<sup>1</sup> Brydges's *Censura Literaria*.

back, and never weary of answering an oft-repeated question. Is the reader a keen intellect, — they sweep on with his race-horse speed, riding with him, neck and neck, over the course. They stay for his lack of perception, or move on with his rapid stride. And how these instructors brighten us by contact ! No stone is so dull, or rock so rough, but it is susceptible of polish by hard rubbing. The very dunces learn something by contact with school and college. Why not, then, the clever youth whose companions are books, or, as Ruskin calls them, “kings and queens” ? These master minds raise us up to their field of vision. We see with their eyes, we reason with their faculties, we are convinced as they were once convinced. They aid our perspicuity of thought, and mark our daily conversation ; they furnish us with new thoughts ; they discipline our minds, and enlarge our conceptions ; and not the least of the advantages we derive from them is the appreciation of our own ignorance.

Indispensable alike for the poet and the orator, the philosopher and the *littérateur*, they tutor the minds of the present by the wisdom of the past. Their influence is irresistible ; and, whether we will or no, the cast of human thought takes its impress from the mold of books.



V. The greatest advantage we derive from the association with books is not, however, in the accumulation of the ideas of others, but in the suggestions that those ideas give birth to in our own heads. The thoughts that are already thought out for us are nothing in comparison with the thoughts that make us think.<sup>1</sup> The ideas of the author which beget the most new ideas in the reader are the ones of value. True it is, that "there is nothing new under the sun." It is equally true that there are but seven primary colors, but from those seven colors may be blended tints and shades innumerable. The assimilation of an author's ideas propagates new ones in the reader. As Mr. Hamerton says, it is like the adding to a substance of another ingredient: it produces a chemical change and a new substance.

Whether books be taken up for pleasure or for profit, they are useful as advancing the intellect, stimulating the imagination, enlarging the reasoning-powers, and suggesting new ideas to the mind. This reading for pleasure is, after all, a harmless, ethereal ideality, — a blowing of bubbles in the air, that savors more of genuine estheticism than all the mewlings of Pre-Raphaelistic poets, painters, and decorators, since that ancient master's demise. Nor is it so

<sup>1</sup> Dr. McCosh.

profitless as we are continually led to suppose. We would not lose from literature the labors of such omnivorous readers as the elder D'Israeli, Burton, Buckle, and a host of others. Finally, whether for pleasure or for profit, a cultivation of the love of books and a literary taste is sure to be the acquisition of knowledge; and a knowledge of books is the beginning of wisdom,—even of that high wisdom which pertains to man's spiritual nature.

VI. The people of to-day are a reading people, and a people keenly appreciative of books. Nothing more than the dry statistics of the thousands of volumes yearly published, bought up and read, is needed to prove this appreciation. Yet this is not a modern fancy with its short-lived day and death. The ancients, who spent years in making that which is now the work of a few days, hoarded up their treasures in libraries of stone. The great Aristotle was the first Greek collector of books, and in his library not the least of the treasures were his own works. Over the arch of the Rameseum at Thebes, which, during the reign of Osymandyas, was used as the repository of his library, was the inscription, "The treasury of remedies for the soul." The discovery of Assyria's libraries of clay by Layard and Botta at Nineveh,

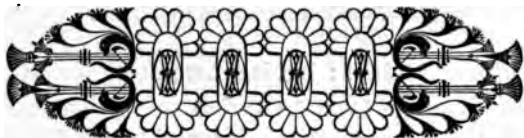
the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, the history of the succession of Alexandrian libraries, and the frequent allusions of the classic Greek and Latin writers to the libraries of the past,—all go to prove how important and essential a feature in the economy of the ancients the knowledge of books was esteemed.

This appreciation of knowledge by the people of the past and present, coupled with the recommendation of the great of all ages to study books as the fountain-head of knowledge, acts as a strong incentive to exertion with every young person. The inclination to be a leader, not a follower, in the race, is the ambition of youth. The young Egyptian at Athens who witnessed the Olympian games, and saw trophies and prizes borne away amid thunders of applause, was not content to remain a spectator. Fired to enthusiasm, he himself would have rushed into the competing-lists; but his friend plucked him by the sleeve, and said, "You will wage unequal strife. Whatever may be your physical strength, you lack training. You know not how." The ambitious youth who would rise to lofty heights through the knowledge of books will do well to apply to himself the advice of the Egyptian's friend. Almost every thing may be learned from books; and, if they are properly utilized, they are our

greatest blessings : but it must not be forgotten, that blessings turn to curses in wrong hands. And there is another maximed truth in this connection, worthy of every reader's attention : "Knowledge is a two-edged sword," and it cuts the unskillful hand that grasps it as easily as it cleaves the skull of ignorance. You must learn to grasp it by the handle, not the blade. It becomes then necessary, in order that you lay not hold of the sharp edge of the sword, that you examine well its fashion, its nature, and its powers ; that you learn, first, how to handle it, and, second, to what execution it is to be put.

To give the reader and student as much of such knowledge as can be clipped from the pages of an actual experience, is the object of the succeeding chapters.





## CHAPTER II.

### HOW TO READ.

“Deep versed in books, and shallow in himself.”

MILTON'S *Paradise Regained*.

I. HISTORIANS, in reviewing the epochs of the ages, are wont to inform us that we live in the age of Steam. Comte and his following call it the Positive age (because it is wildly speculative, I suppose). Some others think we live in the Heroic age, as we aspire to higher things, and in the Brazen age, as we are wild and turbulent. Still, there are some others who think we live in what, for lack of a better name, may be called the Mad age, as we are irrational, extravagant, and extreme in all things.

This last is peculiarly applicable to the American people. There is a madness in the Pandemonium carnival daily exhibited in the Wall-street Stock Exchange,—a money-madness. There is a madness in the fashionable craze of estheticism, decoration, painting, poetry. It is

instanced in the treatment of the poet, painter, decorator, who is one month raised to the topmost pinnacle of our admiration, and the next month dragged down, and trampled in the mire. The pendulum swings far out on one extreme, and then, returning, crosses the even mean line, and swings to the other extreme. There is a madness in the philosophy, that, like a half-grown kitten, chases its tail around in a circle, and, after twenty-five hundred years of arguing, cursing, racking, and burning, comes to the conclusion, that, after all, Thales, the founder of Greek philosophy, was right, and that the beginning of all things was water, — moisture.

There is another sort of madness to which particularly I wish to call your attention; namely, book-madness, — *bibliomania*. Do not misunderstand its meaning; for it is applicable not alone to the collectors and hunters of books, but to the makers and readers of books as well. "Books have brought some men to knowledge, and some to madness." Bibliography has been called "the mad science;" and even our magnificent libraries have been called the "mad-houses of the human mind." And all this with some degree of justice. Watch some of the people who are reading in book-stores, public libraries, and in their own libraries; literary men, hackwriters, reviewers, scientists, skeptics,

ministers, society men,—all sorts. See how eagerly they read, first from one book, and then another, sipping a little here and a little there, until they are living likenesses to the picture of "The Book-Worm," who is standing on a step-ladder with an octavo, from which he is reading, in one hand, a quarto under his arm, and a folio hugged between his knees ! Some of these men are reading "to keep abreast of the times ;" others, to be thought "literary" by their friends ; others, again, for the sake of saying, "I have read so and so." The most of them read without rhyme or reason ; and, like Hamlet, they do but read "words, words, words." Such a thing as an idea they never see, and a happy thought is an unknown conception. They neither understand nor appreciate their reading ; and, while desiring learning, they know not how to set about the getting of it. That which first comes is first devoured, until there is

"A lumber-house of books in every head."

This is book-madness. This is what I mean by the taking-hold of the sharp edge of the sword ; and this is what I would caution you against.

Of all the follies of reading, not one is so foolish in the superlative degree as the haste to know

all things. A book is not read with profit in an hour ; a language is not learned in a month ; nor is the knowledge of all things gained in a year. It can not be done ; and the sooner you find this out, the better it will be for you in a great many respects. Make up your mind at the start that there are thousands of volumes that you never can read ; next, that there are thousands of volumes it is not necessary to read ; next, that there are thousands of volumes it will not pay to read ; and, lastly, that there are something less than a thousand volumes that you ought to read, and read thoroughly. Let the omnivorous readers, who seem to read every thing, play the hare in the race. Do not be envious of their speed, but emulate rather the slow, steady pace of the tortoise. This pushing, scrambling, and jostling in a literary race for knowledge is very much like swine feeding at a trough : they are so overcome with envious haste lest some should get ahead, that they trample on and destroy what would feed the whole drove thrice over. "Haste" in reading certainly "makes waste ;" and, to carry out the forcible if not very elegant simile of the swine, you not only gather little by your haste, but in that haste you trample down and render unpalatable quantities of good material that you will never have the appetite to take up again.



Again, in this connection, let me illustrate another maxim, that one in the copy-book of our youth, — “The more haste, the less speed.”

The habit of reckless, haphazard reading, if once acquired, will totally unfit you for hard study and deep concentration of thought. Such reading lacks proper digestion and assimilation; and in its nature it is so unsystematic that it unsystematizes any head into which it enters.

By acquiring the habit of merely glancing at a thing, you will find, when you attempt to take it up and analyze it, you can not do it. You lose speed by a lack of comprehension. Just as surely as the infant crooks its legs by too much weight placed upon them in premature walking, just so surely will the mind warp that has too many burdens laid upon it. By all means, be in no undue haste. Have but the patience to “labor and to wait,” and the knowledge that comes slowly, surely, and systematically, will give you such power, that all things shall bend before it.

II. It has been truly said, “Reading is for the improvement of the understanding;” and the conclusion we may safely gather from that truth is, that, unless reading is pursued understandingly, it had better not be pursued at all. Utter vacuity in the mind is better than an

accumulation of rubbish. Much better a clean sheet of paper than one covered with scrawls and blots. If your author is beyond your comprehension, throw him aside, and take one you can comprehend. If you are young, do not be borne away by the silly pride of trying to read the books of the philosopher and the theologian : be content to remain in ignorance of them until the time comes when you can read them understandingly. All learning can not be gained at once ; and it is much better to begin the acquisition of knowledge from the bottom. If you attempt to read these books in your youth, you will appear as ridiculous as the monkey, who, in the absence of his master, masqueraded in his wardrobe. The books will not fit you any better than the clothes did the monkey. Your mind will grow to the books ; but, while it is growing, read only that which you can understand. It would be the superlatively ridiculous to attempt the reading of a French or German book, unless you understood those languages ; yet the simple conning of words in an English book is not less meaningless.

III. In order to read understandingly, it is necessary, not only that your author should not be beyond your comprehension, but that what you do read should be read with attention. In

fact, the absolute control of the attention is the most important factor in all effective reading. Without it, you can accomplish nothing. It is a very easy matter, as you undoubtedly know, to hold a book before your face, and read words and pages of words, while your mind is off

“Sailing the Vesuvian bay,”

or wrapped in the beautiful cloud-land of fancy so fascinating to youth. You may read for hours at a time in such a manner, without a momentary consciousness of your book, without knowing what you are reading about, and without gaining a single idea. People who do this sort of reading are very apt to imagine that they are at least not idle; that they are employing their time industriously, at any rate: but they are mistaken. Such reading is the laziest kind of laziness: it is useless work. Again: you may partially follow your author, and keep up a train of foreign thought at the same time; but it is unsatisfactory work. The greatest concentration of thought produces the best and most satisfactory results. To prove this, it is only necessary to instance the wonderful results of the activity of the mind in sleep. Have you never noticed its wonderful power at that time? Have you never made Websterian speeches, written beautiful verses,

and recited long-forgotten passages? Have you never wakened in the morning, and recalled dimly remembered episodes in your dreams? Have you not recalled your thoughts, thinking what a great man you would be if your waking-powers were those of your sleeping-powers? The "wonderful" part of the phenomena is easily explained by the fact, that the whole is due entirely to the absolute and undisturbed concentration of the attention. The senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell — those great distractors of the mind — are comatose, if I may use the term. A lethargy resembling death has numbed these senses. All the train of distractions that attend physical consciousness are gone; the thousand and one petty things that call for attention, however slight, are shut out; and even the mind is not conscious of its own activity. The world without is comparatively dead, and the world within glows like a coal of fire in the mind. If the same attention could be concentrated in the mind during our waking-hours as during our sleep, it would produce precisely the same results. As it is, those men who have made the deepest and most profound discoveries in the world are men who, in their studies, have closely approximated the state of the mind in sleep. Sir Isaac Newton attributed all his discoveries to habits of intense concen-

tration of the attention. Sir William Hamilton has also laid the greatest stress upon its necessity. This concentration of attention in the reading of books may be obtained by force of will in the cultivation of habit, as will be shown farther on, and also by curiosity excited by a liking for that which you read.

IV. If you have any taste for books at all, it will be natural to you to give the preference to certain volumes to the exclusion of others. *Read those books that you like the best.* You will then be sure to give them your attention, and only by your attention can you read with any profit. No matter if the volumes are novels. There is no book so poor that you can not get something from it; and you had better get that something by reading understandingly than to waste every thing by reading without attention. Novel-reading of a certain sort is a disease that works its own cure if allowed to run its course. The majority of them are but poor trash at best; and possibly the best way for you to arrive at a like conclusion is to saturate your head with them, and then you will naturally turn to other things. Do not understand me as classing all novels under the head of "poor trash." There are many of value and profit: and to those novels

might well be applied Mr. Arnold's singular definition of poetry; i.e., "a criticism of life." Moreover, if you should ever take up the study of a foreign language, you will find the novels of that language the very best tutors in the peculiar expressions, idioms, and phrases of the people.

It is not clever to affect an admiration for the productions of those great men whom every one admires, and no one ever reads. If you find Dante "an intolerable bore," after you have tried fairly to read him, why, throw him aside. It does you no earthly good to sit with the *Inferno* before your face in a conspicuous place in a public library. You are too self-conscious that other visitors are watching your glorification in the great of old to gain any thing from it. You are reading letters and words, and not the ideas they convey. If you do not like Milton, Homer, and the classics, treat them likewise; and rest assured, that, if you are a lover of books, a liking for those volumes will develop itself shortly.

Another very good reason why you should not attempt to take up in youth those books which are uninteresting and tedious to you, is that you exhaust their novelty, and carry away with you only the impression that they are stupid and uninteresting. In after-years, when

you could and would read them understandingly and with pleasure, you find them ever repulsive to you on account of the ineradicable impression of youth.

In reading, do not be borne away by the fashion of the day. For instance: it is the present prevailing fashion to read, admire, and recommend the poetry of Wordsworth. Mr. Matthew Arnold says he is a great poet; and all the long line of scribblers, reviewers, and Oxford students, like chiming echoes from a castellated rock, ring in a reverberated "Yes, yes!" Therefore you fret and fume through his works for the sake of saying you have done so, notwithstanding you care not one rap more for his lake-scenery than for his mountain-sheep and idiot boys. The only impression you have retained of his poems is, that they are inordinately stupid and commonplace; and you miss that which is really admirable in them, — their purity of style, truth of description, and subtilty of thought. You are not ready for Wordsworth: let him alone.

If you like the poetry of George Arnold and Poe, notwithstanding the commiserating pooh-poohs of half a century's criticism, why do you not read them? You can understand them, will read them with attention, and derive profit from them through pleasure. Your reading of

Wordsworth was lost time, and always will be, until you can take him up with the same zest and earnest with which you now read Poe and George Arnold. This liking for great books can be acquired, as will be seen farther on ; and the natural taste for one class of literature can be changed to a stronger acquired taste for literature of a higher order.

V. As has been hinted before, reading should be suited to the time of life. Let your inclination and natural bent be your guide as to what that reading shall be. The placing on a shelf of a row of stuffy, dusty old books by a parent or preceptor, and the saying, "At such an age you must read this volume, and at such an age that volume," is a sort of whipping-in of the mind by the lash of conventionalism that effectually breaks the spirit of independence, and stamps out the very germ of originality. It is the pouring of all minds into the mold of a fixed education, making little round bullets of thought that look all alike, have about the same weight, carry about the same distance, and miss as often as they hit. Do not be borne away by conventionalism into the reading of any books at any age, that you take not a particle of interest in. To read a certain lot of books because our fathers read



them before us, is simply treading in their beaten footpath. It is well to be independent, especially in books; and, if possible and necessary, it is well to break away from this set orbit of reading. The Crusoe reading is the literature of youth, and it is well for youth to read it. It changes soon enough to the Byronic age. Then comes the reading of Carlyle, and the admiration of his brilliancy. By natural stages and logical sequences, you advance through Matthew Arnold to Emerson. The transition from them to Herbert Spencer, Comte, Fichte, the Schlegels, and the whole school of philosophies, is easy and natural. As knowledge increases, the inclination is ever upward and onward, in whatever branch of knowledge you choose to pursue. As the mind grows in strength, it naturally reaches out to grapple with material worthy of its strength. But go no faster than your inclination leads you; and again I say, go *only* where your inclination leads you. In your earlier days, let philosophy and the sciences alone, unless you wish to hasten the maturity of your mind; and there is an ugly maxim on the end of my pen about apples that ripen early. It applies to heads as well as apples: so you had much better let a man's work alone until you become a man.

VI. If you desire to make of yourself a man of broad and liberal ideas, a man at his ease on any and all subjects, you must read all things. No branch of science, art, literature, language, mechanics, or physics, can be overlooked. You must be a student of all branches, and the knowledge of one will increase and facilitate your study of others. It will make of you a jack of all trades, a man who will fare poorly in a world the chief aim of which is the accumulation of money. It will also make of you the scholar whose society is eagerly sought, the authority whose opinion is indisputably law, and the gentleman whose learning is his passport in any society. If, on the contrary, you desire your name trumpeted about to the four quarters of the earth; if you desire the plaudits of an admiring public; if you desire the knowledge of some one thing to a point of perfection; if you desire self-satisfaction in your soul, money in your coffers, and wish to make what is generally termed "a success in life," — then, by all means, ride a hobby. Be a man of one idea. Know only one thing, but know that one thoroughly. Take a subject, or, as the Germans do, a branch of a subject, and work it out as a miner works a vein of ore: follow it through stratum after stratum. Read every thing upon it; and stop not there, but read

every thing that bears even remotely upon it. Think out its philosophy, and hound down its history. Study it, study it, study it. After a while you will know more about it through your education than the rest of the world does. The result will eventually be the world's recognition of your knowledge on that subject, — a recognition which will offer abundant consolation for ignorance on all other subjects.





### CHAPTER III.

HOW TO READ, *Continued.*

“Words, words, words!” — HAMLET.

VII. MR. RUSKIN has written a lecture on books and reading, entitled “Kings’ Treasuries.” In this lecture he advocates the study of words and letters, and takes the occasion to say, “And therefore, first of all, I tell you earnestly and authoritatively (I *know* I am right in this), you must get into the habit of looking intensely at words, and assuring yourself of their meaning syllable by syllable, nay, letter by letter.” Mr. Ruskin *knows* that he is right; and the reading-world in general, with wonderful unanimity, has doffed its cap to his superior self-knowledge, all of which may be esteemed eminently proper and correct, but nevertheless a trifle hasty, inasmuch as the rule is laid down as applicable to all literature, without exception. It is undoubtedly true, that, in a book of law-statutes, the etymology and peculiarly legal

meaning of a word may lose or save a man's life. That clause of the Constitution of the United States which reads, "Treason shall consist in levying war," etc., has a decision hanging upon every word of it, which interprets the legal meaning. It is also true of the Bible translations. If you would get at the exact meaning of the text, as conveyed by the original writers, you must understand the Greek and Hebrew etymology. It is so in those works where a few words embody a whole creed or system, and in a great many books where language is manufactured by the authors, or where great condensation of language is used in the embodiment of thought, etc. But all of these volumes merely constitute the exception. The rule is, that, in nine cases out of ten, words are used in their simplest meaning as a medium for the conveyance of an idea; and what the reader wants first and foremost is the idea, not the words.

Mr. Ruskin, by way of substantiating his position, quotes an extract from the allegorical *Lycidas* of Milton. He explains to us exactly what the poet meant by all the strange medley of language regarding "Galilean pilots," "massy keys," "hungry sheep," and "rank mists;" but does he do more than furnish us with a key to a partial allegory? And did he get his key to

this allegory by an intense looking at the words and letters, and a study of them, or by an outside knowledge of the history of the then tottering-to-decay English clergy, and Milton's attitude toward that clergy? It is impossible that from any reading, however intense, of the simple text of *Lycidas*, could be gotten such knowledge as Mr. Ruskin offers in explanation of the words. Let us "look intensely at the words, ay, letters," of Mr. Ruskin's title to this lecture on books, — "Kings' Treasuries." Let us study the etymology, and probe deep into the hidden meaning. "Kings" are the rulers of countries, and their "Treasuries" are places where treasures are stored. What have generally been considered the treasures of kings? Money, crown-jewels, plate, etc. Have books generally been considered treasures by royal personages? No. How, then, shall we get at the author's meaning in these words? Ask Mr. Ruskin what he means, or, better yet, read the introductory remarks to the lecture, and you will find that he apologizes for and explains his allegorical title. You may "look intensely" at the words and letters of Butler's *Hudibras*, but you will not understand their meaning, unless you are acquainted with the political history of his time. So you may examine *Lycidas* and know nothing of its meaning,

unless you understand the active spirit of Milton against the corrupted English clergy. Mr. Ruskin notes the exception, not the rule. He instances words that have a double meaning. In the great majority of reading, a word used in its ordinary significance can be comprehended at a glance, ay, a whole row of words at a glance. They are merely used as conveyances of ideas; and what is wanted is the idea, not the words, — the oyster, not the shell in which it came.

The natural progression of the mind teaches children to read letters; boys, words; youths, ideas; and men, subjects: and this brings me to the main point whither I have been tending; i.e., the primary importance of the study of subjects.

Subjects hold the precedence over ideas in the same manner that ideas hold the precedence over words, and words over letters. They should all be studied in the inverse order of their importance; the main subject holding first rank, to which the others should be made subservient. Had Mr. Ruskin "looked intensely at words, ay, letters," all his life, he would have made that his subject, and would probably have stepped into the position at present occupied by Trench and Grant White in the study of *Words*. As it is, he has studied art and archi-

ture so thoroughly, and has made letters, words, and ideas bend so subserviently to his subject, that you have only to read his lectures to appreciate his learning, and acknowledge his greatness in that very different department of knowledge.

A subject should be taken up and read out till you thoroughly understand it. To take up a book of history to-day, a biography to-morrow, and a scientific work the day after, is not systematic reading, and is unprofitable, unless the study of the three be carried on side by side, from day to day, until each is read out to your satisfaction. If you are reading the history of England, read the books of half a dozen historians, and compare them in fact and philosophy, one with another, until, by comparison, you get an accurate idea of the subject. If in the study of biography you wish to take up the subject of the Life of the first Napoleon, read several biographers, one after the other. Should you read Abbott's life of him this year, and Scott's life of him next year, you will have forgotten a great deal of the former before you take up the latter. Read them one after the other, and compare them as you read, and, in this particular instance, you will find that both biographers have been led astray by partisan feelings, or else were unnecessarily ignorant.



Draw a line between the opinions of the two, and you will have nearly a correct idea of the man. If you wish to verify your opinion further, you will have builded a good foundation upon which to read Bourrienne, D'Abrantès, Junot, Las Casas, or De Rémusat. If you wish an example of where this subject-reading is put into actual practice, you have only to turn to any of the English reviews of the day. Here, for instance, is the *Edinburgh Review*, which contains an elaborate article on The Ancient Architecture of India. The reviewer quotes at the head of his article the authorities he has read, and which he notices in the course of his review. They are Cunningham's *Aryan Order of Architecture*, Fergusson's *Indian Architecture*, Cunningham's *Archæological Survey of India*, Rajendralala Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa*, Burgess's *Archæological Survey of West India*, Fergusson's *Cave Temples of India*. The reviewer has read these volumes by subject, taking up one after the other, and correcting the errors of each before the impressions of the others have left his memory. From the six authorities, he has undoubtedly obtained an accurate idea of ancient Indian architecture, and his opinion and article are valuable accordingly. Had he read these six authorities at odd times, extending over a space of six

years, his labor would have been wasted, and his ideas on the subject would have become so hazy as to be almost worthless. The opportunity of comparison of authors, so important in all reading, would be utterly lost.

This reading by subject may be advantageously applied in the reading of a subject in its branches or subdivisions. For instance: suppose you are a student of mental science, having before you a dozen volumes on that subject which you contemplate reading. Now, instead of reading these books through from preface to index, one after the other, suppose you read the chapters and pages upon Attention in all twelve of the volumes before proceeding with the chapters on the Imagination. In reading the history of philosophy, take up the works of half a dozen authors, and read those chapters on the Epoch of the Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics in each, before you proceed to the Alexandrian schools and the advent of Neo-Platonism. You will certainly find this mode of reading productive of good results, for the same reason given in the case of biography.

In brief, a book which is divisible into constituent parts should be portioned off and read in those parts in the same manner as a subject in general knowledge is portioned off and

studied separately. It gives the opportunity of comparing the writings of authors while those writings are fresh in your mind, and, by the power of argument and weight of authority, of formulating opinions of your own. Study subjects, not words, or books of words — unless, of course, you are engaged in studying the subject of Words.

VIII. By this study of subjects I do not mean that you need read that subject from morning till night, to the exclusion of all other subjects. You may drive "a span," a "four-in-hand," or an "eight-in-hand" of subjects, if you choose, and the very keeping of the different reins of thought separate in your mind is the best practice you could possibly have. It is the very highest type of histrionic art to shift suddenly from comedy to tragedy in the course of a play. So it is the very acme of mental discipline to be able suddenly to shift the mind from one subject to another subject of totally different nature. Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, has something to say on this subject; and, as he was a student and reader in every sense of the word, he speaks as one having authority. "But let different subjects succeed each other, even without interruption, and one is a relaxation to the other; and, without the neces-

sity of discontinuing, I pursue them with more ease. I benefited by this observation in the plan of my studies, and so intermixed them that I employed myself the whole day without the least fatigue." If each individual subject is studied as has been instanced in biography and mental science, the more subjects you have on hand, the greater advantage you will derive, provided the number is not excessive; and that is a matter each student must find out for himself by an analysis of his physical and mental capacities. Extreme caution is necessary, in the carrying of many subjects, that you do not overload yourself. If you do overload yourself, the subjects will be like so many bundles on your back, — some will be dropping off continually, and all will more or less suffer from neglect. It is better to lift the calf at first, and, as it grows, continue to lift it daily, that when it has become an ox your strength may still be equal to the emergency. Under another heading, something further will be said about the advantages to be derived from reading many subjects, not only in the resting of the mind, but in mental discipline.

IX. I have intimated the great advantage to be derived from the comparison of one author with another, and have only to hint further

the advantages of analyzing your author's arguments, and comparing them with your own ideas. Analyze and compare his arguments, that you may establish their truth or falsity, and thereby arrive at correct conclusions yourself. Do not be overawed, or brow-beaten into undue reverence, by the pompous appearance of a man's talk in print. A book is but the expression of opinion by a man very much like yourself; and, being human, he can not be free from error. Take the *dictum* of no man, however "high his titles." Examine the subject for yourself, no matter what it may be. The simple statement of no man is as good as a verified conclusion. An unsecured promissory note is never so good as one with a collateral security attached. If you can verify your author's statements, do so by all means: if you doubt them, stamp your interrogation-point upon the margin. In every case, read up to your author, and fear no man because he revels in a lion's skin of black ink: the skin may contain a real lion; and then, again, it may contain the fabled ass.

X. To read well, you must read critically, analytically, and comparatively; but, in doing this, it is not necessary that you should feel your way along from word to word, with your

forefinger acting as a guide to keep you on the right line. It is especially essential, in this age of books, that critical reading should also be rapid reading. Books increase with the years, instead of decreasing. The accumulation is enormous. The reader is now required to read and know of books, and volumes of books, where it was once a matter of pages and even sentences. You cannot drop behind, but must keep pace with the age. The spirit of the time must teach you speed.<sup>1</sup> As has been stated before, all that is wanted of a book is information on a given subject. This information is obtained through a series of ideas leading up to the subject. In reading a sentence, or a series of sentences, learn to grasp the idea at a glance: let the phraseology, style, and words go uncriticised, unless you are reading for pleasure, making studies in style, or reading those books where the idea is valuable only for the beauty of its expression. If there is any real thought in a sentence, it will stand without fine-spun phraseology: if there is none, it is worthless, and will fall despite the flowers of rhetoric that may decorate its bosom. To repeat myself, what is wanted is the oyster, not the shell it came in; and incidentally it will be well to make note that oftentimes the roughest

<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare's King John.

shell contains the finest oyster. Much wisdom is often found in what are termed "homely truths."

XI. The advice offered in regard to reading only what you are inclined to read is as applicable to a book in its constituent parts as in its entirety. It is not always necessary to read a book through from cover to cover. A great portion of it may be made up of material that you are not interested in, and do not care to read. Another great portion of it may be a repetition of what you have already read a dozen times, and know perfectly, or at least know it so well that you do not care to read further on the subject. To know a thing is sufficient, without hammering it into your head with repetition after repetition.

Again: in reading some books there is such a thing as conception by implication, or the anticipating of your author's conclusion. Doubtless, you have often sat under the speech of some long-winded orator for an hour, and have caught the whole drift of his argument in the first fifteen minutes of his oration. Your information would have been just as complete if you had left the room then; but for courtesy's sake you probably staid, listened to the elaboration and instancing of case after case, lost

three-quarters of an hour, and were insufferably bored. An author's argument, statement, or conclusion can be anticipated in the same manner as an orator's. Three-quarters of an hour can be saved, and no lack of courtesy, by skipping him with the mental observation, "Yes, I catch your point." Again : in almost every book there is what may be called, for lack of a better name, "leather and prunello." Almost every author is a sort of half-caste printer, and understands thoroughly, that, in order to have a book make a respectable exterior appearance, there must be a certain number of pages, and each chapter, for the sake of general appearance and combined effect, must be of a certain length. In order to comply with this printers' requirement, the author resorts to what is known in printers' parlance as "padding." Whether there be ideas or not, and whether the author has any thing worth saying or not, makes not a whit of difference. The chapters must be of uniform length. So there is appended to a little wheezy engine of a thought a long train of words that weary the eye to count. Every idea is hammered and elaborated with instance after instance, until it is so thin that it breaks on inspection. Almost any sort of trumpery by way of allusion is lugged in by the ears, and the longest words in the most in-



comprehensible sentences are introduced. The same sort of patchwork and piecing is practiced in dramatic representations. When there is a "stage-wait" for any reason, a street-scene is pushed on in the first grooves, and two actors are sent on to hold a conversation on any subject they choose, for the amusement of the audience, and to keep up the interest while the trouble is being repaired behind the scenes. This is what is known in histrionic dialect as "gagging,"—a species of trickery practiced in all professions, and not unknown to the noble brotherhood of authors. All this is "leather and prunello," and the best thing that can be done with it is to do nothing with it. Skip it.

"Skipping" a book, however, is one of the fine arts, and requires the very keenest faculties of perception, and an eye that sweeps in every thing in its range, else you are liable to lose a great deal of valuable material. And right here it is necessary to caution you against too much practice in the "art of skipping," especially in youth, as it is very liable to throw a person into that worst of habits, scrappy and fragmentary reading. It had better be taken up only after the habits of reading are firmly established. Book-reviewers are experts in this line, and can tell by a glance of the eye down a page whether there is any

thing upon that page which they wish to know. If there is, they stop and give it a careful reading; but they spend little time in catching by thought that which can be run down by the eye in open field. There are many of the maxims who object to the "skipping" of a book, and quote as an argument that familiar saw that what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well. These same objectors will be found reading only scraps and portions of a newspaper, and selecting an article here and there from a magazine or review. The literature of the newspaper, periodical, and book, is all the same for reading-purposes. It is every reader's privilege to pick and choose "what is worth reading at all." Whether it shall be "read well" or not, is another of the reader's prerogatives, which he generally makes dependent upon the value of the material.

XII. There is another species of book that is scarcely worth reading at all. I refer to those books that are as murky and foggy as a London night; those books which — in the much-ridiculed language of Mr. Matthew Arnold, applied to the Americans — "lack lucidity." Their authors seem to have conceived them in darkness, and borne them in confusion. If you have the happy faculty of creating order out

of chaos, and of taking a bird's-eye view of all things at a glance, perhaps it may be well to riddle out the enigmas of such books ; otherwise they would better be let alone. Authors who write these books generally have some good friend, who, acting in the capacity of critic and commentator, transforms carelessness into design, and obscurity into profundity. Some people are heretical enough to class Browning, Swinburne, and even Emerson, among the obscurely profound. Whether they are so to you or not, is a matter of which you are the best judge.





## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW TO READ, *Concluded.*

“To read without reflection is like eating without digestion.”

XIII. AT the risk of repeating myself, I must again caution you against the useless and meaningless habit of reading “words, words, words.” Reading should be carried on with the object of obtaining knowledge, either by accumulation or suggestion, on *some given subject*; and every thing should be made to bend before that object. Accumulate all the information upon the subject that you can, and, after you have done this, begin and sort out your authors in your head very much as you would sort out a hand of cards at whist. You place your trump-cards here, and your side-suits there, and range them in the order of their strength and use in the game. You do not have your cards scattered all over your hand, so that when called upon to play you have to run over thirteen cards to find one, and oftentimes do not find the right one

then. After you have sorted your cards, you reflect how you shall play them. In the same manner you must recall what you have read, and arrange your authors in the order of their strength. Sort out your knowledge, and form a system of it in your head that can be used in future reference, and then reflect how you shall best use it. A coal of fire is kept alive only by an occasional breath of air, and knowledge is kept bright and serviceable only by an occasional rub in the service. If you do not use it in some manner, your time and labor in getting it is lost. And not only that, the accumulation of rubbish, instead of being a benefit, is an injury to you; for your mind will grow to resemble a junk-shop, where miscellaneous accumulations are piled up so high against the windows that daylight can not enter; and, if you seek for a scrap of knowledge there, you will be very like the junk-dealer, who, with his dingy lantern, turns over heaps of rubbish, and, after hours of search, oftentimes gives up the hunt in disgust. Follow a *system* in accumulation and arrangement, and by all means avoid the senseless and objectless gathering together of knowledge after the junk-dealer's fashion. Learn to reflect how you shall best put your system in working-order. The principal object in reading other men's thoughts is to teach us how to use

our own. The knowledge that begets knowledge is chiefly valuable. The carrying-around with you of another man's ideas is about as senseless and worthless as a parrot's knowledge of the English language: the bird shouts, "Hurrah! Tom Collins!" and a few other pet phrases, and has finished; you recite another man's idea by rote, and then collapse. Get some ideas of your own; and the best way to get them is to find out through books how other people got theirs. Learn to reflect and think for yourself. Dugald Stewart has said something so *apropos* to this subject that you will pardon its quotation: "Nothing, in truth, has such a tendency to weaken, not only the powers of invention, but the intellectual powers in general, as a habit of extensive and various reading without reflection."

XIV. There is another very good reason why a systematic arrangement should be adopted in the accumulation of knowledge. The object of reading some books is not so much to accumulate absolute and precise knowledge on given points as to know where, and in what books, such knowledge can be found when occasion requires it. This is especially true in the study of law. Certain abstract principles must be known to every good lawyer; but the appli-

cation of those principles, and the decisions that have been rendered upon them, are things that he very seldom trusts to his memory. The subject is too extensive for an absolute knowledge. His memory is used only to refer him back to the books he has read on that subject, and those portions of the books bearing upon his particular case. In a great many kinds of reading, our memory is to our knowledge as an index is to a book, — merely a means of pointing out where certain material may be found ; and, if that index is complete and correct, it is perhaps quite as much as can reasonably be expected of the human mind. The power of actual remembrance of things is the highest type of memory, and is accorded to the few. The power of retention sufficient for suggestive remembrance when occasion requires, is the type possessed by the many, and is about all that can be expected of the memory.

XV. Yet the memory of man is a wonderful thing. It receives the impression of all things, and retains that impression for all time. Each word, thought, look, and action is stamped upon the mind as upon the open page of a book ; and it can not be wholly erased. It is true that time fades out the color, dims the impress, and blurs the meaning of the sentences.

The same page may be printed over and over again with wholly different matter, but nevertheless the impress remains like a dim and faded palimpsest: some magic chemical rubbed over the parchment will restore the original impression. You may write your name on the sand of the seashore, and apparently the incoming wave sweeps it away; but the impression it has made is not entirely lost, though you may not see it. You may carve your name on the granite rock, and it will stand out in bold letters to your view for years. Even so does the memory receive impressions, — some in strong outline, and some in a dim and hazy background; yet none of these impressions are ever wholly lost. They seem to pass away from the memory for years, and to be utterly forgotten, until some day a slight thing brings back the recollection.

“It may be a sound —

A tone of music — summer’s eve — or spring —

A flower — the wind — the ocean — which shall wound,  
Striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly  
bound.”

To be able to strike this “electric chain,” and to call

“Home to its cloud this lightning of the mind,”

is a valuable acquisition to every reader of books. I say acquisition, because memory is a



faculty acquired much oftener than inherited ; and the various modes of its cultivation are practiced by most all extensive readers.

(a) The mere memorizing of incomprehensible words or sentences is as useless as the school-boy's memorizing the rules of grammar : you retain the impression of the words as they look upon the page in your memory, and that is about all. Learning by rote is in general merely a drilling of the eye and mind into a recognition of the pages of a book by their individual and peculiar appearance, not by their intrinsic worth. It is a faculty very easily acquired ; and the mind can be trained, in even a few days, to produce seemingly wonderful results. To-day you may be able to memorize one page of a book ; to-morrow, two pages ; the next day, three pages : and so on, until ten or fifteen pages a day can be memorized.

Sir Robert Peel, when a boy at Drayton Manor, was accustomed to repeat to his father as much of the Sunday's sermon as he could remember. He soon grew to remember it all ; and afterwards, when in Parliament, he astonished every one by his ability to recite, almost *verbatim*, the entire speech of an opposing member.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Florence, the actor, in a suit brought against him for infringement

<sup>1</sup> Smiles, *Self-Helps*.

of copyright in representing the play of "The Ticket-of-Leave Man," in open court, under oath, said that he had carried away from the theater the whole play in his mind, and reproduced it from memory. The faculty of memorization is a very useful thing to have on hand in reading, provided that you memorize the ideas, and not merely the words and sentences. If there is any choice between the two, memorize the thoughts, and let the phraseology go.

The best mode of retaining ideas in the memory is by the systematic association of those ideas with some main subject to which they relate. Let the association have a logical formation, so that the ideas resemble the links of a perfect chain ; or, to use a better simile, let the ideas resemble the spokes of a wheel, which, proceeding from the circular rim of outside thought, center in the main subject, the hub.

(*b*) Another mode of retaining knowledge, and one much used, is the note-book. It has its advantages and its disadvantages, of which each reader must judge for himself. As a means of concentrating the attention, and formulating a system of what you have read, the taking of notes is of great advantage. The writing-down of extracts will also be found a great aid in memorizing. As a mere index of

reference, the note-book is almost useless ; for, if it is of any proportions, it becomes a commonplace book without an index. If it is arranged like a ledger, under the letters of the alphabet, it is much better, though it soon fills up, and appendixes must be started.

(c) A much better system for the practical uses of the reader and student is a note-book arranged on the plan of the card catalogues in our public libraries. Cut up bristol board into cards measuring two inches by five inches. Make your notes on these cards under the proper heading of author, title, or subject, in the same manner as you would form the index of a book or magazine. Index and duplicate a book or subject under author, title, and subject,—all three,—if you choose to be more complete and accurate. Sort out your *index rerum* of cards in alphabetical order, just as you would a dictionary, and place in a wooden tray suitable to the size of cards, separating the letters of the alphabet by movable partitions, and you will have a little encyclopedia of individual knowledge of incalculable value to you. The great advantage of this method over the ordinary note-book is, that new subjects can be added continually by filling out new cards, and slipping them in their place in alphabetical order, thereby avoiding the appendixes so wea-

risome to the investigator; it also renders the index complete up to the day and hour.

(d) There is another method of making notes, often used, and very good for critical and analytical reading as concentrating the attention. I refer to the analyzing, doubting, and confuting of a work through the medium of *marginalia*. Nothing delights a critical reader of a book so much as to pick up a "large paper copy" where there is abundance of margin to make notes upon. Nothing so much delights a good reader of a book as to read a volume which has been read before by some able critic who has recorded his impressions of the book on the margin of the pages as he passed over them. Some of the choicest morsels of literature have been handed down to us through the medium of *marginalia*, in cases where it has been employed as a running commentary on the text. It is a capital way to make notes as you read, and one that is practiced by those readers who wish a refutation to stand beside the original statement, that those who run may read it. It might be well to add that a refutation of argument through the medium of *marginalia* does not consist in the making of pot-hooked interrogation-points, or the writing of exclamations such as "Oh!" "Pooh!" "Ridiculous!" "Don't know what you mean!"

"Fool!" etc. Such *marginalia* are as worthless as they are senseless. It is hardly necessary to hint, that this method of making notes had better be applied to your own books rather than to those of your friends. Some people keep books for appearance, and think their proper place is an ornamental *pose* on the shelf of a library; and, so long as they own the books, I suppose they are entitled to that opinion about them.

XVI. The mind, though not so easily wearied as the body, can nevertheless be exhausted. To read beyond that point where the attention begins to flag, is not only useless, but it may be productive of injury. Many hours at a time spent over one subject, in uninterrupted study, is bad, even if the attention does not flag. There is little danger of its working any *acute* injury upon the intellect by either brain-fevers or insanity, as we are continually informed by physiologists, and the advocates of physical culture. In fact, a well-trained mind is a very hard thing to hurt. Like a Toledo blade or a cedar bow, it can be bent almost double without injury. Its development in strength is, like that of the body's, brought about by use: and, up to a certain point, use increases development; but beyond that point, like the double bent sword and the overstrung bow, it is liable

to snap. The greatest injury that can come to an intellect is the stunting effect produced by over-work, when the mind is young and weak. The same injury is produced in the *physique* of a young horse that is broken to work before his muscles are developed and hardened. A running horse is in his prime at three years old: at six, he is broken down and worthless. If properly handled, he is sound at ten, and can do good work at even twenty. The stunting effect can be seen upon the body of a boy put into a factory to do a man's work at twelve or fourteen years of age: he is always a puny, sickly, half-grown man. The mind (or, what is in effect the same thing, its organ, the brain) can be stunted, and even ruined, in the same manner, by premature study, and too much of it; and, if the injury be once inflicted, it is permanent. There is no "sweet oblivious antidote" that can "minister to the mind diseased." Many bright intellects are yearly dimmed throughout the colleges of our country by this stunting effect; and it is of commoner occurrence than is usually suspected, because in its nature the disease is passive, and does not attract attention. It will make its presence known to the close observer, if he will but watch some "brilliant hard-working fellow in college," after he has left college, and started out in life. If you

find him entering the scenes of actual life with a lifeless, listless, half-dazed air of passive indifference, you may know that it is due to an early over-straining and warping of the mind. It is a noble mind undone, like a splendid horse that bursts his mettle at the quarter post. There is a way of resting the mind by shifting the subject as the mind wearies. Rousseau could not study on any subject for more than half an hour at a time. If he tried to force his attention, he only wearied himself in vain. The way in which he remedied the difficulty was by shifting the subject continually; and, in doing that, he read so many subjects that he at last became one of the celebrated French Encyclopedists. It is as Longfellow says,—the turning of logs of wood makes a dull fire burn; and so the changing of subjects enlivens a dull brain. In resting the mind by shifting the subject, it is well to occupy the mind, when freshest, with the hardest subjects, and, as it wearies, gradually unstring the bow by taking up lighter subjects, until the last thing read before entire mental rest or sleep may be a light novel or poem. “The habit of intense study for many hours at a stretch” should be discouraged. D’Israeli the Elder tells us that it used to be a law of the Jesuit order, that no study should be pursued by any of the brothers

for more than two hours at a time,—a law commendable for its wisdom.

XVII. In the growth of the human mind the tendency of taste is ever upward. From crude, uneducated natural tastes, the aspirations of the growing mind advance to educated and acquired tastes, which are more permanent and enduring, as founded upon more substantial bases. Our early loves and likings, formed by our crude conceptions, and regulated to our feeble understandings, are continually deserting us as in mental growth we ascend a higher plane, and view their comparative insignificance. The paintings which in our youth are considered ideals of beauty, and the embodiment of the highest art, are transformed into mere daubs when viewed by the eye of educated criticism. The court-house or school-building that to our youthful sight was grand and impressive in its architecture, sinks into a miserable cabin or hovel when seen by us in after years. So it is with literature. The love and admiration of our youth for the yellow-covered book, the pages of which are spattered with the blood of innumerable Indians, pirates, and murderers, is turned to indifference at first, and afterward to disgust, as we advance in ideas, and acquire a taste for higher things.



An intellectual taste is as easily acquired as a physical taste. The body can be trained to enjoy a Turkish bath and woolen clothing on a hot summer's day in the same manner that the mind can be trained to enjoy the dry, abstract principles of law. A love for them never came naturally in either case. The dinner-table maxim about every person having to eat three olives before becoming fond of them, is another instance in point; and I have only to mention the acquired tastes for narcotics, opium, tobacco, and liquors, to fully prove the ease with which permanent tastes can be acquired.

These last few instances happen to be acquired *bad* tastes; but good tastes are just as easily acquired: and, if the bad ones are in preponderance, it is because they are more popular, as more general, and not because the good ones are any harder to learn. I believe that a liking for study, or any particular branch of study, can be acquired by a little perseverance in overcoming natural repugnances, and that the liking will be stronger for its acquirement.

Every reader should try to acquire a liking for loftier themes and better books. There is a great deal of the drudgery of hard work about it at first; but that same drudgery brings a discipline that ends not only in a complete mastery of the subject, but in a liking for it that

springs forth from the respect we have for ourselves in the vanquishing of a stubborn task. Within my own experience I have tried this with success, and would recommend others to at least make the trial. There is scarcely any thing you can not accomplish if you have but the strength of mind to endure, and the force of will to drive through. Do not misconstrue this into a contradiction of what I have previously said about reading only that which you like. As I have tried to explain, there are two kinds of liking, — natural and acquired; and, if you follow either, you will be following your inclination: but you must begin by following your natural tastes; and they, as I have instanced, give place to acquired tastes of a higher and more permanent order.

XVIII. The subject of how individual branches of literature, and professional literature, should be taken up and read, — for instance, the reading of history chronologically, and of poetry in epochs, etc., — has been so ably handled by President Porter, in his *Books and Reading*, that I shall not spend the time in saying that which has already been well said. Again: to lay down rules for the study of law, science, medicine, theology, philosophy, etc., would presuppose in the writer a knowledge of

all things, which, I very frankly confess, I do not possess. What information is given in this chapter is applicable to all study, generally. After the student is once on the right road, guides and "blazes" are not needed. Paths, and vistas of paths, will open up before him as he proceeds. He will, of necessity, meet many stumbling-blocks in the way; but, by proper use, they can be converted into stepping-stones. Many things must be worked out from the rugged ore of experience; and there is much of *technique* to be found in actual experience, that, from necessity, can never be told in a book.





## CHAPTER V.

### WHEN AND WHERE TO READ.

“Pale Study by the taper’s light,  
Wearing away the watch of night,  
Sat reading, but, with o’ercharged head,  
Remembered nothing that he read.”

CHURCHILL.

I. THE time when, and the place where, you read, is a matter of comparatively little importance, provided that you really do *read*, and not merely hold a book before your eyes. Time, place, and circumstances act but as the auxiliaries to the concentration of thought; but in this capacity their importance must not be underrated, for it is greater than is usually supposed. It is said, that Sir Isaac Newton and Sir William Hamilton could read as well at noonday on the crowded thoroughfare as they could at that mysterious hour betwixt night and morning when the burning of the “midnight oil” is supposed to have such a salutary effect upon the readings and writings of poets and philosophers. It is also said, that Alfred de

Musset wrote lyrics and *chansons* upon the corner of a table in an ale-vault, surrounded by boisterous, rollicking companions, as easily as he might have done in the privacy of his own study. But these exceptional cases do not prove the busy street and the noisy beer-saloon to be the best places for the pursuit of reading or writing. The fact that Lord Byron wrote *Don Juan* on gin and water, whilst undressing, after returning from balls and suppers that winter in Venice, only proves that Lord Byron could write brilliantly at any time, even though tipsy on gin, and half dead with exhaustion. There is no telling how much better a poem he might have written had he dispensed with the gin, and written at hours when his brain was less fatigued. Again: the instances of great readers and writers who have given birth to great thoughts, aided by the combined efficacy of stars and "midnight oil," prove nothing whatever. They probably used that unnatural time and place for the same reason that Newton and Hamilton read on the streets at high noon, — simply because there was no better place obtainable at that time. Those students who have been known to the world as "night-readers" have generally been the avowed disciples of Tom Moore in the belief that the best way to lengthen our days is by stealing a few hours

from the night. They worked then because the day was not long enough for them. But all the brilliant accomplishments of the midnight hour do not necessarily prove that to be the best time for study. It is hard to say what these readers and writers might not have accomplished, had they taken more favorable and regular times for their thinking. Sir Walter Scott, in his early years of authorship, wrote at night; but later on he reversed his plan, and wrote most of his novels before breakfast in the morning. Goethe wrote *Faust* in the morning, and almost all of Longfellow's writings were the result of morning work.

It is undoubtedly true; that, for the average student taking the usual modicum of daily physical exercise, the night is a better time for study than the day; and this is because it is more conducive to deep and profound concentration of thought, on account of its surroundings. There is a calmness of the body that comes at night, which is brought about by physical fatigue. The muscles are tired and relaxed; the nerves are quieted; and the feeling of restlessness, and inability to sit quietly in a chair, is gone. The feeling as though the day's work were done, and nothing ahead of us but sleep, is in itself a narcotic. There is no apprehension of things that are to come, as there is in the morning; and,

better than all else, that great distractor of the attention, the sight, is comparatively cut off: its radius is limited to the few feet illumined by the light of the lamp. The sky, the air, the earth—all the visible world—is shut out; and the mind is hemmed in by the four walls of your apartment. Again: the sense of hearing is gone. The clamor that begins with breaking day ends with dusk. You are not interrupted by noisy children, barking dogs, and street-venders' shoutings.

“ All is so still while sitting there,  
That tapping death-ticks in the door  
Sound like some spirit's knock.”

Beneath the cloak of night, the world in sleep seems wrapped in death; and you sit like a solitary watcher above the dead, the only thing living.

These are the auxiliaries of the attention that favor night-study; and, to repeat what I have already said in a former chapter, the body approximates a comatose condition better at night than at morning, because the senses are more or less deadened by physical fatigue. But it must not be forgotten, that, if the body at night is fatigued, the mind is also, and that the weariness of brain may over-balance the calmness of the body. If the day could be spent in sleep,

and the night devoted to study, great results could be accomplished from possessing a fresh mind, with a partially dormant body, produced by the surroundings of night, as mentioned above. Georges Sand did this with great effect. She rose at three o'clock in the afternoon ; and what with botanizing, physical exercise, receiving and calling, she passed the time until twelve o'clock at night, when she entered her library, and wrote until six in the morning, at which hour she retired to rest. It is more than possible that there was a method in her alleged madness, as there was in the ridiculed habits of the French historian, Mezeray, who used to shut himself out from the sunlight, and study at noonday by the light of candles. Even eccentricities are pursued with some object, and it is very probable that these people had something more in view than the attraction of public attention.

The great factor in any successful study is the power of attention. The great concentration of thought in sleep is produced by the dormant condition of the senses. The greatest concentration of thought while awake can be produced by fatiguing the body, and deadening the senses, without fatiguing and deadening the mind. This is approximating to the condition of sleep, and the effect may be produced in sev-



eral ways. The first and the only one that is advisable for any reader to follow is by fatiguing the body with physical exercise *before* study, instead of *after* study. It is customary for students to study all day, until their nerves are unstrung, and their heads spin around, and then, late in the afternoon, to take physical exercise. If you will reverse the plan by taking physical exercise the first thing in the morning, and then begin study, you will find it productive of good results. The exercise should be of sufficient quantity to weary you, so that all feeling of nervousness and restlessness is done away with for the day, and the body feels perfectly at ease in repose. By this plan of taking physical exercise the first thing in the morning, you will start in on the day's studies with a partially wearied body, and deadened sensibilities, that can be used as auxiliaries to the concentration of thought in a fresh, unwearied mind. This may seem to you merely a theory; but try it by putting it to the practical test, and you will not find your labor lost. I merely offer this as a suggestion, well knowing that to offer it as a rule would require the stating of so many exceptions as would render the rule useless. Every reader must find out for himself by experience the effect of time and place upon his thoughts. Jonathan Edwards thought out his best polemical works on horse-

back, and John Calvin wove the fabric of his celebrated theology while in bed. If the habits of these two men had been reversed by putting Edwards to bed, and Calvin on horseback, a brace of intellectual blockheads would perhaps have been the result. A genuine eccentricity in the time and place of reading must be respected, because of its powerful effect upon the attention.

I am aware that in exceptional cases the body can be thrown into a semi-conscious condition, and the mind kept awake like a coal blown with the breath, by the use of liquors, opium, hashish, bromides, chlorals, etc. Some of the most brilliant writings and speeches ever known have been made under the influence of liquor, where the mind was unaffected, and the body semi-conscious; but these are the very rare and exceptional cases. Where one man is brilliant under the influence of liquor, there are ninety-nine of his companions who are stupid, maudlin, and silly; their brains having been stupefied simultaneously with their bodies. De Quincey's *Confessions* tell us of the grandeur and magnificence of his conceptions under the influence of opium; but, again, he and Coleridge were exceptions. In most cases, opium simply paralyzes the senses and the intellect; and the person sinks into a stupor in which his head is of about as

much use to him as a block of wood. Others, under the drug's influence, are thrown into a morbid and horrible mania, resembling *delirium tremens*. It is only one in a thousand who experiences the Oriental brilliancy of the imagination described by De Quincey. The name of "hashish," too, — coming to us, as it does, from "fair Araby," — is associated in our minds with the superhuman splendor of the intellectual imaginings; Oriental story is filled with its wonderful, stimulating effect upon the brain; and not a few novelists have used the idea in their books to produce striking effects. The whole is pure fable. The very first effect of hashish is the loss of the power of controlling the thoughts. After this, comes an idiotic, silly feeling of pleasure over nothing; and, if the dose is repeated, it produces complete obliteration of the faculties of perception. None of these powerful narcotics and stimulants are to be recommended, and even bromides and coffees should not be used. They are all unnatural and injurious; and though yours may be the exceptional case, and they may take you over the course at lightning speed, yet the race will be a short one. Like the walking-matches of modern times, you may get over your five hundred and fifty miles in six days, and get your champion's belt and a percentage of the gate-money; but you pay for it

by lopping off some years of life. There is a great law of compensation in this world, that equalizes all things; and one extreme must be counterbalanced by another extreme. Let narcotics and stimulants alone; for, aside from their worthlessness as a mental stimulant, they will break down and ruin the very finest physical system.

II. The greatest importance should be attached to the regularity of periods of study and reading. One hour a day for six consecutive days will accomplish double the results of six hours in one day. A certain period of time in each day should be devoted to a certain subject, and the hours of study in a day should be portioned off in this manner. Make the rule cast iron, and subject to no exceptions until you have so acquired the habit and the love of reading that you can depend upon yourself not to neglect it.

It is a very usual thing for college students and young readers to begin their readings by portioning off for different studies about fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. Possibly, for a week or so they may keep up to their plan, allowing, of course, several hours out of the fourteen for the purpose of telling their fellow-students how many hours a day they study, and

what hard students they are. At the end of ten days, their fourteen hours *per diem* of study begins to resemble the two hours a day piano-practice of the average society girl; i.e., half an hour devoted to hunting up her music-books and finding the proper lesson, half an hour to opening the piano and dusting the keys, half an hour to admiration of herself in the polished rosewood over the keyboard, half an hour to thinking about her new dresses and new lovers, with the possible drumming of a scale on the keyboard by way of accompaniment to thought.

At the end of two weeks, the average Freshman's grand preparations for the accomplishment of great things by reading and study has fizzled out to as little time and study as will enable him to escape a downright failure in his recitations the next day. Now, if the youthful reader will only begin at the bottom of the ladder, and begin very modestly, he will find the ascent much easier, and more compatible with his self-esteem and dignity, than the ignominious slipping from the top all the way down to the bottom. It is not necessary, because there are twenty-four hours in the day, that those hours, each and every one of them, should be occupied according to rule and method by some pursuit or occupation. Let three-quarters of them come and go as they please, and devote

but six of them to reading, and in a few years you will find yourself a learned man.<sup>1</sup>

You may cut down that number one-half; and even by taking the time in each day that you customarily devote to an admiration of self in the mirror, the fit of your dress, or the twirling of your mustache, and occupying it in judicious study, you will be surprised, at the end of a year, at the results you have accomplished. However small the amount of time you devote to reading, set it down in your calendar, so that it will recur at regular times, and the results will astonish you. There are, of course, readers whose lives are so irregular that they can claim no particular hour of the day as their own; and they must read where, when, and how they can. There is another class of people—business men in particular—who “have no time for reading.” If they care for books at all, they will *make* time. Want of time is excuse for no man. Franklin gained knowledge at the printer’s desk; Elihu Burritt learned a dozen languages at the forge; Pliny the elder had a slave read to him at dinner; Pliny the younger read on horseback; and it is said Longfellow translated Dante’s *Divine Comedy* by working at it a few minutes every morning while his coffee was boiling. Literary biography is teeming with

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson.

illustration after illustration of the great things that have been done by the proper economy of scraps of time. This only proves that the waste moments of the day can be put to use. The solid blocks of time that can be taken from the heart of the day by most every young reader will produce much better results ; for they give the opportunity for uninterrupted study, — a thing the Germans lay great stress upon.

III. In regard to *where* reading can best be pursued, I have only to refer the reader back to what has already been said about those great distractors of the attention, the senses. In order to read with great concentration of thought, it is better to shut yourself out from the world as much as possible, notwithstanding the street-reading of Newton and Hamilton. Not only are the noisy street and the saloon poor places to read, but the wood, the meadow, the river, and the mountain are likewise bad places. The haunts of nature are even more distracting to the attention than the haunts of men. The surroundings are too delightful ; and the imagination will break away from the book, and whisk you into the four quarters of the globe in as many minutes. Each sight that is seen, each sound that is heard, each perfume that is smelt, brings forth a host of fairy fancies that

tug and draw upon the imagination, each in a different direction. The senses have entirely too keen a relish for the beautiful to make reading profitable there; and the poet's ecstasy about "shady nooks" and "purling brooks," that happen to rhyme with "reading books," is mere stage clap-trap, that catches only the applause of the gallery. I can imagine no better place for deep and profound reading than in the ideal den of some half-starved scholar and author, — a room with its four bare walls, its dingy window, its square table, and its rickety chair; a place where the most attractive thing in the room is the open book on the table before you. Goethe's room was such a room by his preference. The public library, in its sequestered alcoves; some unfrequented room of a house; a large parlor, cool and shaded, that is not much used by the family, and where the light is filtered in through heavy curtains; your own room, — are good places for reading.

There would be a better place, were it not for the injury it will work to the eyes and health generally; namely, your bed, either at night or morning. In short, any place where the surroundings will not distract your attention from your book, and where you are not liable to be interrupted, will be found a good place for reading.





## CHAPTER VI.

### WHAT TO READ.

"All rests with those who read. A work or thought  
Is what each makes it to himself, and may  
Be full of great, dark meanings, like the sea  
With shoals of life rushing."

BAILEY: *Festus*.

I. To stand in the presence of a thousand different tints and shades of colors, and to select from those tints and shades the most beautiful, is not more difficult and bewildering than "to stand in the midst of a vast concourse of books, to pick and choose what to read." In the first case, one person prefers for himself a tint of red, another prefers a tint of blue, and still a third selects a tint of yellow. Each follows his own taste, and each chooses that suited to himself. The impossibility of choosing one color that will suit the taste of them all is patent on its face. The simile holds good in the choice of books, and what we shall read. Each

man must pick and choose for himself, and his choice should be influenced entirely by his inclinations. As from the thousand tints he can choose but one, so, in the same ratio, from a thousand books he can choose but one. That choice would better be the book which pleases him best; for he is choosing selfishly, and the contents of the book he chooses is material for his own head, and not another's. As it is impossible for any one person to lay down a law of esthetics applicable to all tastes, which shall say, "This tint is more beautiful than that," so it is equally impossible for one reader or writer to lay down a law of reading which shall say, "This book is a better one than that." Tastes, likes, and appetites vary in different people; and, as books are written by different people, they more or less shadow forth the author's individuality, which may be pleasing to one person, and displeasing to another. Lists of books under the various captions of "One Hundred Best Books," "Choice Reading," "What to Read," etc., from whatever source they emanate, as applicable to readers generally, are worthless. Each list but expresses the preference of one man. Did all our thoughts think with his thoughts, all our eyes look through his glasses, and all our tastes resemble his tastes, his list of books would be applicable to us.

As it is, though we resemble one another generally, as peas in a peck measure, yet we differ in the conformation of a wrinkle. To take a practical example: not one of the lists of books cited as "choice reading" but what will contain, under biography, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. It is esteemed one of the greatest literary biographies ever written, and has been read and recommended by the great men of all countries; yet, for good reasons, you may differ from all established opinion. You may consider Johnson a great literary bull, who bellowed his way into the field of literature, and by dint of his bellowings, and a liberal show of hoof and horn, maintained his position because no one had the courage to kick him out. You may think Boswell no better than the parasitical cockle-burr that usually ornaments a bull's tail. You may esteem the whole biography a conceited narration of two vastly overrated men, and you are entitled to your opinion. If you do not like Johnson and *Johnsoniana*, by all means let him alone, and choose some one that you do like. The recommendation to read certain classes of literature is just as worthless as the recommendation to read certain individual books. One writer recommends the reading of novels; and another writer, of equally good judgment, frowns upon it. Use your own judg-

ment. If you like novels, read them: if you do not, let them alone.

“In brief, sir, study what you most affect.”

Take no man's dictation as to what is good reading, and what is bad. Choose for yourself a subject to read upon, and, in reading upon that subject, examine the books for yourself. You can tell in a few moments whether or not a book is worth reading. As has been said before, one man's opinion is but one man's preference, and may be right or wrong. A literary judgment is generally supposed to be formed by canons of criticism; but the canons are generally individual canons, and the criticism is but the synonym of a preference.

II. The reputation of a book is oftentimes an unreliable stand-point from which to decide whether we shall read it or not. Mr. Emerson's advice to “read only famed books” has been almost universally condemned as bad. Literary criticism, which usually makes or unmakes a book, is very often influenced like a row of upright bricks, — by the falling of the first one; and to say that that first brick does not always fall the right way is only mildly suggestive. It is dependent very much on the reviewer's temper and caprice, whether the brick in his hand

shall support the keystone in the arch, or shall be used in pulverizing an obtrusive head in the field of literature below. The younger pups in the huntsman's pack of forty-five generally wait for the older dogs to "give cry;" then they rush in after the tails of the "leaders," baying and yelling like a band of wild Indians, utterly regardless of whether the leaders are on the right scent or not. Away goes the chase, yelling and howling, — pell-mell, helter-skelter, over ditches and fences, — for a mile or more, until possibly it comes to an abrupt terminus in some farmer's barnyard, to which point the headlong pack have trailed home the family cat. It is precisely so with literary criticism. It may lead off in the right, or it may lead off in the wrong. If the latter is the case, it always takes years for it to get upon the right scent again, and in nine cases out of ten it never gets back at all; the book having the life shaken out of it in its infancy by the pack of scribblers, reviewers, and hack-writers, who follow the chase, and glory in "the death."

The lists of books that have been scowled upon in manuscript before publication, and have been pronounced brilliant successes after publication, would fill a book, and include many of our standard classics of the day. The scowling goes on after publication the same as before;

and, whether a book is pronounced good or bad, it is generally the thinking that makes it so.<sup>1</sup>

Literature is crowded with records of good books that have become obsolete and neglected; and you have only to look over the shelves of a public library to assure yourself that worthless books are alive by the thousands and tens of thousands.

Still, the reputation of a book indicated by intelligent criticism is a great criterion to judge by in selection. Even though at times it be unjust, it is the best we have, except our own judgment. So far as possible, we should choose our companionship in books very much as we do among men. We are influenced somewhat by the reputation of a man we would wish to call a friend, but our main prejudices are imbibed by our personal like or dislike.

III. Old books are not necessarily valuable in their contents any more than in their price. The chief value of a large majority of them is for waste paper. "Books are made from books;" and the modern ones are but repetitions of the old ones, annotated and brought down to modern times by editors who sometimes have the presumption to call themselves authors. They are apt to be better as embodying the best of the

<sup>1</sup> Shakspeare's Hamlet.

old with the addition of the best thought of the new. The best editions should be obtained and read if possible. By the "best" editions I do not mean a necessarily "rare" or "scarce" edition, or a "large-paper" edition with a fictitious money valuation attached to it in some bookseller's catalogue. The best edition is that one which contains the best explanation of the text in the shape of notes and annotations by a skillful editor. You will find good foot-notes and *marginalia* of great value, not only in proper understanding of the text, but in referring you to other writers on the same subject.

IV. The question of whether classical study is more profitable and conducive to a sound education than scientific study, or *vice versa*, is something that has already been ably discussed, and needs not repetition here. The classicists have a very able advocate in Mr. Matthew Arnold, and the scientists are not behind with Professor Huxley at their head. Both of these men have written strongly on the subject; and, if you wish to read further on it, Mr. S. H. Taylor has prepared a whole volume on *Classical Study*. The two factions are very much like the nursery Jack Sprat and his wife, — the fat is gall to the one, and the lean is wormwood to the other. Possibly both are right; and then,

again, possibly both are wrong. If you are a person of leisure, reading only for general information or pleasure, you will profit by reading both. Confining yourself to either one or the other is virtually the choice of a profession, — a matter in which every one is his own best judge. To quote Montaigne from memory, "We are not under a king : let every one choose for himself." The choice of a profession is generally the result of the advice of friends, but it should not be so. Every one should follow his own likings and inclinations, no matter whither it leads, provided the inclination leads him to follow a pursuit that is honorable and respectable. If, after careful deliberation, you wish to become a play-actor, by all means follow your wish. If your heart and soul is in it, you will succeed ; and far better that you succeed there than that you make a failure in the pulpit or at the bar. " Nothing succeeds like success ; " and the complement of the maxim is equally true. A failure is a dismal affair, even though the aspiring archer shoot his arrow at the sun ; for, however high and swift its flight, it pierces only air, and at last falls back to earth.

V. After you have chosen your profession, educate yourself in that particular branch thoroughly, and, if needs must be, to the exclusion



of all other reading. Read not only the text of your profession, but the notes and commentaries ; read the fact and the fiction, the history and the philosophy, not only in the abstract, but in the concrete. Every thing that in any way has even a remote bearing upon your subject, or is auxiliary or ancillary to it, should be read. If you are a student of law, be not content with a sufficient knowledge of Blackstone, Parsons, and Washburn, to pass an examination for admission to the bar, and a sufficient knowledge of your State's statutes to bring an action in court : read the history of your profession, and its origin in the history of civilization ; read the *Institutes of Timour*, the *Talmud of the Jews*, the *Pandects of Justinian*, the *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, and the *Theory of Legislation*. It will do you no harm to find out something about so comparatively an unknown writer as Cujacius. Look over his *Opera*, and find out, at least, of what he wrote. Read all things bearing on the Law ; and as day by day your knowledge increases, and you rise higher and higher to the point of bird's-eye view, you will be surprised at the readiness with which the less will give place to a knowledge of the greater. Those little points of *minutiæ* and technicality so perplexing to the pettifogger will crumble at the slightest touch of investigation.

If your profession is in its nature limited, or even if unlimited, and you have the time, read as much in outside literature as you can ; for, in a well-trained mind, all branches of knowledge combine to help one another. Erasmus has said something of this : " Letters, the sciences, and philosophy are all conducive to any profession whatsoever."

VI. Mr. Emerson has written an essay (in his *Society and Solitude*) on *Books*, in which he expresses his opinion of translations in the following language : " I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations. . . . What is really best in any book is translatable. . . . I rarely read any Greek, Latin, German, Italian, and sometimes not a French book, in the original, which I can procure in a good version." This is Mr. Emerson's position ; and Mr. C. F. Richardson, in his volume on *The Choice of Books*, considers it quite impregnable, because, for aught I can see, " Mr. Emerson is one of the scholarly men of his age, — an author who has, in an especial degree, made the wisdom of all times pay tribute to him."

All this is true. Mr. Emerson was, and is, and always will be, considered a great man ; but, for all that, he no more resembles a demi-

god than Alexander of Macedon. He is no more infallible than the pope ; and like all popes and great men, who are human, he can not choose but occasionally to err. Perhaps it is not fitting to pronounce him in error here ; but, at the same time, it may be well to examine the subject for ourselves.

No one will dispute the necessity of our having a knowledge of the literature of Greece, Rome, Germany, Italy, France, and possibly Spain. The knowledge of their literature is to our literature as is a child's knowledge of its parent ; for to the literature of those countries our English literature is indebted for its birth. No one will dispute, that, if a person does not understand the languages of those countries, it is better for him to read their literature in translation than not to read it at all. The question narrows itself down to, "Which is the better, — the translation, or the original, to a person who can read both, and whose option it is to read either?" Mr. Emerson understood all the languages instanced ; but he preferred reading in translation, because "what is really best in any language is translatable," and, again, he liked "to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech."

What is really best in any language can possibly be translated, provided that the translator

is in mental caliber on a par with the original author. It takes a master mind to embody and reproduce the conceptions of a master mind. Especially is this true of translator and author, where the understanding of the one must grapple with, overpower, and bear anew, the dim and shadowy conceptions of the other. I have no hesitation in asserting, that not one-tenth of the translators of the Bohn Library, so highly recommended by Mr. Emerson, even remotely approximate the abilities of their authors. Witness the translations of the *Decameron*, the *Hepameron*, and Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, — merely a string of filthy stories, told in the commonest manner, without wit, pith, wisdom, or literary grace, conveying no hint of good reason for the fame of the originals. Schiller came near equaling the original in his translation of *Macbeth*; but mark it well that Schiller was no mean intellect, and, in dramatic force and effect, was second only to Shakspeare's self. Coleridge came near rivaling his author in the *Wallenstein* and *Piccolomini*. And Bayard Taylor, in his translation of *Faust*, came nearer still to the expression and spirit of the original. But these exceptional translators are great minds, — minds whose clear perceptions pierced into the dim and shadowy nearly as far as their authors, and whose powers of reproduction were proportion-

ately great. Many men have tried to draw the bow of Ulysses, and have failed because they had not strength sufficient for the feat. Many men have tried to interpret the thoughts and language of their superiors, and have failed likewise. Aside from the impossibility of a less mind reflecting a greater, there is another very good reason why these English translations can never be made wholly satisfactory. It is far easier to translate an English work into any of the languages named than it is to translate a work of any of those languages (except French) into English, because of the poverty of the English language. It is the poorest, in words, of all languages under the sun pretending to have a literature. The translator may fully comprehend the meaning of the text, and yet not be able to express it plainly and delicately for lack of words. The English language has one hundred and eighteen thousand speaking words, including the plunder from other languages, which constitutes more than one-half the sum; the Italian, for instance, has twice as many; and the Arabic, nearly double the number of both of them. Witness the contrast, and note the vast vocabulary they have to pick from in the expression of fine shades of meaning, as compared to ours. In the Arabic they have over one hundred different words to

express an animal that has for its English equivalent the one word "camel." The only resource of the English translator in such a case is to patch out the Arab's meaning by the atrocious use of adjectives, which suffer still further from limitations.

Again: there is much of individual spirit and expression, much of national peculiarity, in each language by itself, that can be conveyed only by the peculiar idioms, phrases, and sentences of that language. It can not be translated into a foreign language, because that foreign language possesses no equivalent that will express it. The supernatural awe that Shakspeare has thrown in the witch's warning, "Macbeth! beware Macduff!" is turned to the ridiculous in the French translation, which, literally re-translated, reads, "Look out for yourself, Mr. Macbeth!" Again: take from *Hamlet* the exclamation, "Dead, for a ducat, dead!" and compare the French translation "*Je gage un ducat qu'il est mort,*" or, literally re-translated, "I bet a ducat that he is dead." These are instances of French translation from the English. If you wish instances of the English translations from the French, take up the translations of Racine, Molière, Corneille, etc., and examine them casually with the French originals. It is very much like an artist with two or three tones trying

to copy a Bunce Venetian twilight or a Diaz group,—it is a failure because he has not the material at hand. True it is that the outlines of the picture may be sketched; we may see the artist's idea, and partially grasp his intentions: but it will lack tone; the beautiful harmony of color will be lost; and the finished rotundity of the original conception will be missing.

It is true, in the translation of books, that the bare outline and ideas are susceptible of translation; and this is what Mr. Emerson means when he says, "What is really best in any book is translatable." But the ideas, in the majority of books translated, are not the only things to be considered. Many men before Shakspeare's time thought out his ideas, but none ever so well *expressed* them. The thoughts of most of his dramas are historical, and were known before he was born; but no dramatist of history ever put such language in the mouths of kings. Expression is a matter of vast importance; and note it down, that, in most of these English translations, the expression is as much sought after as the idea.<sup>1</sup> I have not forgotten that in an earlier chapter the reader was advised to seize the idea,

<sup>1</sup> "The works of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakspeare, and Goethe, exist in the words as the mind in conjunction with the body. Separation is death. Alter the melody ever so skillfully, and you change the effect. You can not translate a sound; you can not give an elegant version of a melody. . . . All that is Homerian in Homer, or Hora-

and to toss the phraseology aside like the worthless shell of an oyster. The reader will please not forget, that I expressly excepted the reading of "those books where the idea is valuable only [in this case, *largely*] for the beauty of its expression."

There are other apologists for the English translations who have argued with some vigor that the translations of the Bohn Library are much better than nine-tenths of the readers of the originals could themselves make. This, again, is true; but the readers of the originals *do not make translations into the English*. It is one thing to conceive an idea, and another thing to express your conception in black and white letters on the pages of a book. This latter the reader is not required to do. He may thoroughly conceive his author's meaning, and understand his peculiar expression of that meaning; but, should he try to convey his understanding to another by word of mouth or pen, it would be poor work indeed. Many actors have conceived the proper spirit and feeling of Hamlet; but their expression of that conception by stage representation has ever been "flat, stale, and unprofitable." The eye

tian in Horace, evaporates in a translation. . . . As soon will another Homer appear on earth as a translator echo the marvelous music of his lyre." — MATHEWS: *Words, their Use and Abuse*.



of the most untutored rustic can conceive the beauty of an autumn sun that sinks down over the western mountains among billowy clouds in a blaze of splendor. Every tint and shade of color is reflected upon the retina of his eye, and telegraphed to his brain ; but let him try to express by words or letters his conception, and what is the result ? He, like the reader of beautiful ideas and sentences, fully appreciates the beauty, yet lacks the power of expressing it ; and while all due credit is given to the artist who can paint, and the poet who can describe that dying sunset, yet the imitation can in no sense ever equal or take the place of the original.





## CHAPTER VII.

### WHAT TO READ, *Concluded.*

"There is no book so worthless that I can not collect something from it." — SCALIGER'S *Works*.

VII. The morality or immorality of a book, as those terms are generally applied, is a subject I am very loath to take up; for at best it is a disagreeable controversy, wherein a difference of opinion breeds such bitter antagonism as in the ancient days led to the rack, the fire, and the stake. It seems an impossibility for any two writers to agree upon the subject; for, where one demands that literature shall respect strict morality, the other cries for freedom from all moral restraint whatever, and prates of art for art's sake, and of the purity of all things to the pure. The two are as wide apart as the poles of the earth; and there is as little prospect of those poles meeting as there is of the controversialists on this subject arriving at agreement. They are both right and both

wrong; for, as is usually the case in all discussions, the disputants do not so much differ as they misunderstand.

In considering objectionable books of every name and nature, whether the fault be immorality, bad grammar, or coarse and indecent language, it is well to consider the *extent* of the fault, and the value of the remainder. Nothing is or can be perfect. Imperfection is the inheritance of all things earthly, and nothing exists but has some flaw to mar it. And yet the imperfections of a part may be passed over unnoticed, in our admiration of the whole. A rose is a thing of beauty, worthy of all admiration; and he would be a foolish man indeed who threw it upon the ground and trampled it under foot, simply because, in plucking it, its thorn has pricked him. The painting that may be marred by bad perspective is not to be tossed aside as worthless for that reason, nor should it be condemned to oblivion for that alone. It may be a marvel in figure-drawing, and excel in color, and is worthy of preservation, even though, to put the case in the extreme, its bad perspective may be actually detrimental to our artistic taste. The analogy holds good in the case of a book. It may contain an immoral spot or blemish in its pages, and yet the remainder of it be of incalculable value.

It is very easy for a *coterie* of self-constituted literary judges to seat themselves on the wool-sacks of literature, and, "with awful voice," pronounce judgment on the things that are good and the things that are bad. It is very easy to condemn in a few moments that which has taken years to prepare. Faults and flaws are to be found in every thing: they are to be found by the hundreds in books; but it is not right, it is not just, that those faulty books should be slaughtered by public condemnation for mere blemishes. Literature should be dealt with more leniently. The good and the bad should be carefully weighed; and, if the bad is in such predominance that its pernicious influence overbalances the value of good, then by all means cast it aside: but for a mere blemish, if the book possess qualities to recommend it, it should not be rejected. If every book is to be guillotined by the blade of morality for slight offenses and mere blemishes, then the classics, Shakspeare, Milton, — ay, the Bible too, the very teacher of morality, — must fall.

Again: it is an impossibility for any student to gain an accurate and concise knowledge of the world's history by treading the fairy fields of ideal morality alone. His pathway must diverge. The best knowledge of Rome and of the Roman Empire can be obtained from the

brilliant pages of the historian Gibbon; and his materialistic and "unchristian" philosophy, as it has been called, must be met with, and either disregarded or overcome. To obtain a knowledge of Christian art, you must imbibe a knowledge of Pagan art; and to understand its many shortcomings and indecencies, you must go into the history of its origin. To obtain a correct knowledge of poetry, you must go back to the fountain-heads, and read through the often repulsive pages of the Greek and Latin poets. In history, art, poetry, letters, philosophy — the reader must meet with the pure and the impure alike; and better far than shunning an evil, is meeting and overcoming one. No rule is applicable, and no condemnation can supply the clear discrimination between the good and bad which every reader possesses and should learn to apply. Let a book be judged with discriminating justice, and ever take into consideration the fact that it is but the work of a man, who, being himself imperfect, can not but make imperfect things.

VIII. In passing judgment upon the morality or immorality of a book, it is necessary that you should have some law of right and wrong by which to judge. To make a distinction without a difference, I shall assume, for the

purposes of this chapter, that there are two moral laws in existence ; namely, the universal moral law, and the individual moral law. Whether the universal moral law sprang from a combination of individual moral laws, or whether the individual moral law is derived from the universal moral law, is a question I leave philosophers and moralists to wrangle over. The only moral law that is of any practical use in determining the morality or immorality of a book, is the one you already possess, and put into practice every day of your life ; namely, the *individual* law of right and wrong, which is in the heart and brain of every person, of whatever nation or race : and *this is the only law that is ever applied by any person*. Moralists by the hundreds will talk to you of “universal truth” and “ethical standard,” and spin the finely woven fabric of ethical theories ; but if you ask them for a moral code of procedure, a practical law by which to regulate daily action, they are unable to give it. They themselves, in judging of right and wrong, whether consciously or unconsciously, use the individual, and not any universal, standard of truth.

I shall therefore assume (if you choose to call it assumption) that there is such a thing as a moral law of right and wrong existent in the mind of every human being. Whether it is the

result of birth, education, or intuition, is another question I do not care to discuss, because it is immaterial in this connection. This moral law must be the rule of action in judging of the morality or immorality of a book.

Better far and of more value than all the whys and wherefores of moral science, is the application of this individual law, as originally suggested by Dr. Southey, in the analyzing of a book's influence upon you, by finding out in what manner the book has changed your opinions. If you find in reading an author that he is directly antagonistic to you in his moral teachings; that he leads you to believe what you once thought wrong is right, and what you once thought right is wrong; if he induces you to think lightly of what you have ever considered sacred; if he blurs in your mind the distinction between good and evil, vice and virtue, truth and falsehood, — you may safely set him down as an immoral writer for your reading; and he, and his kith and kindred, had better be cast aside.

IX. In judging of the morality or immorality of a book, the most competent evidence for or against it is the influence or effect it has upon the reader; but in judging of the author, whether he is a moral or an immoral writer, the

proper evidence is his intention and his motive. For instance : take *Tom Jones*, the *Decameron*, or the *Heptameron*, and upon almost every youthful reader of to-day they will have a degrading, contaminating, and immoral effect. They are undoubtedly strong types of immoral books, and yet their authors were not intentionally immoral writers. They duly respected the ethics of their day and generation, and their works were not considered to have an immoral effect upon their original readers. The books have become immoral ; but their authors did not and could not foresee the future, and it seems hardly justice that they should be condemned as immoral writers.<sup>1</sup>

I should like to illustrate this discrimination between the author's intention and the book's effect, and at the same time call your attention to the difference between the effects of a patent immoral book and a latent immoral book ; also to the difference between moral grossness and refined immorality.

The authors who in their works recognize and uphold moral truth, who draw a sharp, clear, and well-defined line between right and

<sup>1</sup> "A writer, from what we call the grossness or freedom of the times in which he lived, may be gross in language, and even in description and allusion, and yet not be impure." — PORTER : *Books and Reading*.



wrong, virtue and vice, truth and error, and yet in the exposition of those truths, through an error of judgment or a lack of good taste, use coarse, vulgar, and offensive language, can hardly be called immoral writers, though their books may nevertheless have a demoralizing effect upon the reader, and be objectionable on account of their pernicious influence.

On the contrary, there is another class of books, written with satined elegance and silken grace. They are so soft, melodious, and glistening in their serpentine flow, that the sharp contact of a harsh Anglo-Saxon word or phrase is never met with. As if to impart more refined and brilliant meanings in correspondingly brilliant words and phrases, the pages are strewn with the language of a French court. An improper intimacy with a woman is called a "*liaison*;" a new lover, by way of change, is called a "*caprice*;" an utter lack of modesty and decency is called "*chic*." So throughout the whole book there is no sound to offend the ear: all moves on in perfect harmony and grace, with an elegance fitted for the drawing-room of nobility; and at the close the youthful reader throws down the book with the belief that he has been in the very best society. But has he? If the book be a novel, tear away the mask of language, and see what there is beneath it. Do

you not see that the heroine, whom you have pitied, admired, and loved by turns, is merely a courtesan, who has with impunity transgressed every law of morality? Do you not see that the hero, whom you have come to consider one of Nature's noblemen, is nothing more than a libertine and rake, utterly devoid of principle? Do you not see vice upheld and deified by success in such a manner as to obtain your sympathy, and virtue made the butt and jest, the low-comedy part, the failure, of the whole book? Do you not see that the distinctions between right and wrong are wholly obliterated, and the lesson taught that virtue does not pay, and that vice, by being triumphant, does pay?

This is the immoral book worthy of the strongest condemnation; and yet it seldom gets it, because half the time people do not perceive its immorality. Like Cleopatra's asp, it is coiled in beautiful foliage. The sting of the serpent is unconsciously received. Such a book lies on the library center-table in its elegant cover, and young men and women sip its poison and think it nectar. Poor Adrienne Lecouvreur smelled nothing but exquisite perfume in the bouquet of flowers sent her by the Duchess of Bouillon; but, alas! the subtly sifted poison in the petals killed her.

Many of our newspaper moralists and review-

ers have had their moral sentiments badly shocked by Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, because the author has seen fit to use some disgusting language that might better have been left out; and yet the same moralists are more pleased than pained by the reading of Ouida's *Moths*. Some people have been considerate enough to esteem Whitman a fool; but few, if any, have ever thought him a knave. He never praised vice, and condemned virtue, nor made gods of libertines, and goddesses of the *demi-monde*. His principles have never been impugned. The only objection to his writings is that he writes too plainly and undisguisedly about indecent things. The same can hardly be said of the author of *Moths*.

The manner in which an author regards and treats of the main principles of morality is of vastly more importance than his treatment of some petty detail, or his use of coarse language. The effect of obliterating the distinction between right and wrong is deadly. The use of filthy language is in itself disgusting and loathsome, but it is not necessarily hurtful.

X. There is another class of objectionable books, which, for lack of a better name, I shall call the socially objectionable. Whatever is morally objectionable is likewise socially objectionable;

but the reverse of the statement is not in all cases true. It is hard to draw a line distinguishing the one from the other, but perhaps the distinction can be illustrated by some examples. A cesspool that spreads through the air its noxious odors, breeding miasmas of disease, and contaminating the health of the community, is not morally objectionable: it is a social nuisance, and therefore socially objectionable. A person in whose company you are thrown, who is in the habit of using bad grammar, coarse phrases, and vulgar allusions, may not influence your morals one jot or tittle: in fact, he may make vice so disgusting and unattractive that you will sigh for virtue; and yet he may be socially objectionable because of his tendency to corrupt good manners, not morals. The volumes that draw sharp lines of distinction between right and wrong, vice and virtue, and yet use disgusting language here and there, though they may be pernicious, are not morally objectionable. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* respects ethical truth, and yet is socially objectionable on account of its filth. It is not poison, but mud of the gutter. So there are parts of Shakspeare and Milton that are not fit to be read in public; yet neither of them was a pander to immorality in any sense of the word. So, again, there are parts of the Bible socially

objectionable to such an extent that the clergy take very good care not to read them from the pulpit.

To this class of objectionable books belong also those volumes which treat erroneously of life, — the “blood and thunder” literature; the literature that is coarse, ungrammatical, slangy, and corrupting to the good breeding and manners of youth; and the literature of ideality, that transforms the world into a beautiful fairy-land, where the pathways are ever strewn with roses lacking the thorns; the literature that gives false impressions of existence, and starts the youth off on the voyage of life with music, flowers, waving handkerchiefs, and applause; the literature that deludes him with fairy hopes, bringing the smile to his face, and never speaks to him of disappointment, storms, shipwreck, agony, and death, that come in every life. This class of literature is objectionable, only when it comprises the greater part of the book. In the majority of cases where such objectionable passages are but casually introduced, they may be treated as mere blemishes, and passed over as such.

XI. The rule which has been laid down so many times to the reader and student, to “read only the best of every thing,” to “read only

good books," to "read only true books," etc., is excellent in itself ; and yet it has one great exception, almost as important as the rule, which I beg to offer here for the student's consideration.

*Exceptionally*, it is well to read badly, crudely, incorrectly written books (I am not speaking now of immoral books), and for this reason : *the analysis of error is one of the most important factors in the establishment of truth.* It is just as important to know what truth *is not* as to know what it is. It should be studied from the negative as well as the positive point of view. The only way that truth can ever be recognized or appreciated is in its eternal fitness to our wants by comparison with error.

There are always two sides to a question ; and, in order that you may judge impartially, it is necessary that you hear the case of both plaintiff and defendant. Both can not be right, but you must hear them both in order to judge which one is right. Besides, the minister of good must have a knowledge of evil if he wages successful warfare ; and the philosopher will acquire his greatest wisdom through the sophistry of his opponent. The knowledge of error is the very beginning of truth. If you are a machinist, study the workings of this machinery, that you may find out where it falls short of

accomplishment, and improve upon it. If you are a student of poetry, and have aspirations to soar aloft on that wing whose pinions have furnished poets with the immortal gray goose-quill, study the writings of the magazine poets, poetasters, and ballad-mongers; for you will learn more by the analysis of their errors than by the reading of Shakspeare's truths. Study their failures, so that you may recognize their companion failures when you meet them in your own work. If you are an artist, study the failures of a former school of art by analyzing its work. If you are a lawyer, study the arguments of your opponent, that you may impale him on his own lance. The knowledge of error should be sought after, that out of it you may bring forth truth. It will be objected to this advice, that the weak minds may be borne away by the arguments of error. The objection is unanswerable. The mind that can not distinguish truth from error, when they are placed before it, has no more business in the field of investigation than an imbecile judge in the Court of Exchequer. Both are out of their element. Yet still such things come to pass in the history of each day, and there seems no help for it. There is no salve that can be applied to the mortification of the friends of the incompetent.

Before closing this chapter, and without wishing to appear egotistical, I would like to quote myself against myself. "A book is but the opinion of one man, and may be right or wrong." If you will follow the code of procedure I have described above for the establishment of truth by the examination of error, you will ascertain whether I am right or wrong, — whether my advice is good or bad : and, even if you decide against me, you will have proved me partially right by using the very method I have recommended for the recognition of truth ; i.e., the analysis of error.







## CHAPTER VIII.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY.

"Bibliography is in truth the mariner's compass of learning; for without it the student would be floating on the immense ocean of literature, with no other means than what chance afforded of attaining the object of his voyage." — LOWNDES.

I. BIBLIOGRAPHY, or, as it has been called, "the science of books," is a branch of knowledge which at first glance would appear to be the exclusive and circumscribed profession of the printer, bookseller, and collector. Indeed, it is generally so considered by the great majority of readers: but the high authority I have quoted at the head of this chapter would seem to indicate that it is an important acquirement for readers and students as well; for "the art of navigation is not more indispensable to the mariner than is a certain acquaintance with bibliography to him who passes any part of his life in intellectual pursuits." It is so important an accessory to literature, that it can not be passed over in silence: for, to understand

books, you must understand catalogues; and, to understand catalogues, you must have a knowledge of bibliography, a part of which is the formation of catalogues. It is the student's guide; and he who heeds not the signboards and index-fingers on the road to the temple of knowledge will surely go astray in innumerable Serbonian bogs.

Bibliography is a science that originally sprung into existence from the necessity of arranging in systematic order the thousands of volumes that so quickly came from the press after the establishment of printing. The bibliographer in the Hellenic days was merely a copyist of manuscripts; in the early days of printing, he became a copyist of titlepages; and in the eighteenth century the French librarians dignified the profession by giving it "a local habitation and a name," and (as is claimed) establishing the *Catalogue Raisonné*. At present, bibliography claims a place among the sciences; it being the knowledge of books, which now is not confined to an "erudition of titlepages," but embraces the subject-division of all the branches of human learning. Its province, it is claimed by some, also extends to the criticism of the contents of books, of which something further will be said under *literary* bibliography.

Horne, in his *Introduction to Bibliography*, says, —

“Bibliography literally signifies the description of books : in a more extended sense, it denotes the knowledge of books as it regards, 1st, The materials of which they are composed ; 2d, The subjects discussed by their respective authors ; 3d, Knowledge of different editions, etc., and system of classification.”

This is generally considered as the outside scope of bibliography ; but for this chapter I shall use a much better and more modern classification into, —

1st, Material bibliography ;  
2d, Critical, literary, or intellectual bibliography.

This last division, for purposes of convenience, I will further subdivide into, —

- (a) Cataloguing of books ;
- (b) Criticism of books.

II. Material bibliography is confined entirely to the history, description, and exterior of a book, and includes the quality of paper, size, printing, printer, date, edition, correctness of pages, illustration, binding, place of publication, merits of different editions, rarity, values, etc. This, and much besides of the *technique* and *minutiæ* of a book's history, is of more importance to the professional

bibliographer and librarian than to the student and reader, and I will not stop to notice it here. It is, however, very well to know about these little technical matters; and, as they are easily learned, the student would better learn something of them. "Uncut," "cropped," "rare," "spurious," "suppressed," "scarce," "out of print," "large paper," and "private print" editions are simply what those adjectives indicate. The bibliographer's professional "vernacular" is very simple; and the terms generally used will suggest their own meaning, not needing an interpreter, as most "dialects" do. It is important, in calling for and recognizing books in a public library, that you should know their sizes; and therefore, at the risk of repeating what you already know, I will say that a folio is a volume in which the sheet is folded or doubled into two leaves; a quarto, folded to four leaves; an octavo, folded to eight leaves, etc. Time was when folios, quartos, and octavos, from whatever press they were issued, respectively corresponded one to the other; but, in the present age of book-making, the mania for oddity and novelty is not confined alone to the contents of a book, but has spread to the cutting and binding, until the printers and binders have so confounded confusion in regard to them, that it is necessary to have an inch rule and a

guide-book in order to tell a 12mo from a 16mo. For reference, in case of an emergency of this nature, I append a collated table of sizes taken from the tables of Mr. J. B. Huling, published in the *Library Journal*. It gives the size of each sheet in inches. The untrimmed page, not the cover, is to be measured.

TABLE OF SIZES OF BOOKS.

	INCHES.
Imperial broadside . . . . .	22 × 32
Royal " . . . . .	20 × 24, 20 × 25
Imperial folio . . . . .	16 × 22, 16 × 24
Royal " . . . . .	12 × 20, 12½ × 20
Demy " . . . . .	11½ × 17½
Imperial 4to . . . . .	11 × 16, 12 × 16
Royal 4to . . . . .	10 × 12, 10 × 12½
Demy 4to . . . . .	8¾ × 11¼
Imperial 8vo . . . . .	8 × 11, 8 × 12, 7½ × 11
Super Royal 8vo . . . . .	7 × 10½
Royal 8vo . . . . .	6½ × 10, 6½ × 10
Medium 8vo . . . . .	6 × 9½
Demy 8vo . . . . .	5½ × 8¾
Crown 8vo . . . . .	5 × 7½
Post 8vo . . . . .	4½ × 7½
Foolscap 8vo . . . . .	4½ × 16¾
Medium 12mo . . . . .	5 × 7½, 5½ × 7½
" 16mo . . . . .	4½ × 6¾, 4½ × 7, 4½ × 7
" 18mo . . . . .	4 × 6½
" 24mo . . . . .	3½ × 5½
" 32mo . . . . .	3 × 4½

There is another way of telling the size of books, which is hardly worth your while to investigate. I refer to the water-lines in the

sheets of paper, which in a folio, 8vo, 18mo, and 32mo, are perpendicular, and in all other sizes, except the 24mo, are horizontal. In old books there is still another mode of recognition of sizes, by catch-words and signatures. A knowledge of these special modes of recognition is, however, of no earthly value to the student. It belongs to the bibliographer and librarian, as does most of material bibliography. A simple outline knowledge of it is sufficient for the student and reader.

III. Literary, critical, or intellectual bibliography, as it is severally called, is to all branches of knowledge in books as an index is to an individual book. It points out where a given class of literary material may be found, and not only indicates the quantity of that material on any given subject, but, in its peculiar province of criticism, sums up the *quality* of that material, and its value in the estimation of the reading world. When viewed in the light of an index, the reader will not fail to appreciate its great importance as the handmaid of learning and the guide in reading.

(a) The cataloguing of books under the author's name in alphabetical order is a very simple matter, requiring no skill, a considerable amount of patience, and an inexhaustible fund

of hard manual labor. It is merely a transcription of the titlepage, with the size and binding of the book, and some mark indicating where it is to be found. The making of a catalogue of books, ranging by the title exclusive of the article, is a similar affair, requiring about the same means for accomplishment. A catalogue of subjects, and the classification of those subjects to suit the requirements of the different branches of knowledge, is a matter of entirely different import, and one that has puzzled the brains of not a few learned men.

The *Catalogue Raisonné* is attributed to the French bibliographers and librarians, and principally to Garnier, Bouillaud, and Martin; though why they should be credited with what was thought out and originated with other people is one of the mysterious and unknowable things. Aldus, the Venetian printer, in 1498, got out a catalogue of Greek books arranged by subjects; and centuries before him the great Aristotle was working, and turning over in his head, systems for the classification of human knowledge, to be applied to books. Gesner and Bacon, in their metaphysical speculations as to the genealogy of knowledge, formed systems of classification before the French bibliographers; and, even in France, Estienne and Naudé hold priority of date over those who

now have the credit of the origin of the classed system.

All of these men, with Bentham, Coleridge, Leibnitz, and a host of other philosophers and metaphysicians, spent a great deal of time and labor in devising genealogies of knowledge, and systems of classification. Coleridge worked incessantly in the preparation of a metaphysical system, that proved so impracticable that he afterwards disowned it; and Ampère, the Frenchman, thought over the subject so much that he lost his wits, and became crazy. Time has proved all their labor lost, except as the modern bibliographers, in studying their systems, are learning to shun their errors. All the long array of systems that succeeded one another, each gotten up with the avowed purpose of practical application and use in catalogues, or in the arrangement of books on the shelves of libraries, have proved utterly worthless, and for this reason: they have ignored simplicity, and founded their systems upon logical concatenation, subtle analysis, and striking terminology.<sup>1</sup> They have made systems applicable to their own minds, but not to the minds of readers and students in a library. The reader searching for a book in a catalogue classified under the system of Bacon, Coleridge, or Leib-

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, *Mems. of Libraries*, vol. ii.



nitz, must be possessed of a mind that reasons as the minds of these men reasoned, if he would find the volume. It is unfortunate, but nevertheless true, that there has been in the world's history but one Bacon, one Coleridge, and one Leibnitz; and it is not likely that any one will ever catch up their mantles of greatness, if they ever dropped them, and be endowed with their reasoning faculties. Their respective systems were undoubtedly well fitted to their minds and reasonings; but, when applied to the minds and reasonings of the reading public, they were productive of interminable confusion. The manner in which one man reasons up to a logical conclusion may be entirely different from another man's manner; and what is most wanted in subject indexing, and systems of classification, is *no reasoning at all*. As mere speculative classification of ideas rather than books, or as genealogical trees of knowledge, the systems enumerated may be sound enough; but their authors designed them for practical application in catalogues and libraries, and in this they have utterly failed. What the reader wishes, in catalogues and libraries, is not an abstract classification of the branches of knowledge as they may appear to suggest themselves most naturally to a reasoning mind, but something

of a simple, practical nature, that shall aid him to find the written thoughts of all mankind upon a given subject.

M. Camus,<sup>1</sup> a French bibliographer of some importance, published a classificatory system, arranged as a logical concatenation of thought suggested itself to him. He went forth into the open air, and, looking up into the heavens, thought of the subjects of knowledge surrounding the unknown worlds, and their Creator; and he placed the literature of the sky and the heavens first in his system. He next viewed the earth and its changes, and placed the literature of that second. He then thought of self; and the literature of humanity was placed third and last. These three subjects embraced all knowledge; and every book and every subject should be arranged and placed in logical order under one of the three classes. One naturally wonders, with a hundred thousand books classified under these three heads, where he would look for the Bible, which embraces all three of the subjects, or for a treatise on Purgatory, that has nothing to do with any of them. Such was the logical concatenation of Camus' thought; but I venture the assertion that nine men out of ten would have reversed his plan, and thought of themselves first, and the heavens last. Dau-

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, *Memoirs of Libraries*, vol. ii.

nou, again, takes up classification in the order in which a man acquires knowledge from youth upward, beginning with letters in boyhood,\* and ending with divinity in old age; thereby disregarding the scriptural injunction "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Denis, another bibliographer and eminent librarian, makes amends for Daunou, however, by taking a text from Scripture as the foundation of a system: "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars."

The seven pillars in this bibliographer's system are Theology, Jurisprudence, Philosophy, Medicine, Mathematics, History, Philology; and under these heads are classed all books and all knowledge. Suppose, now, that the Astor Library were arranged on this principle, or suppose its catalogues printed in conformity with this system, and you, a reader, wish to find a list of works on "Art:" under which of the seven heads would you look? Where would you look for Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, or Simon's *Mines and Mining*? Edwards, in his *Memoirs of Libraries*, instancing the practical absurdities that grow out of a super-subtile theory, finds in Girault's catalogue the Art of Swimming under "Cosmography," and the Arts of Divination under "Natural History."

Bacon, Bentham, Coleridge, and Leibnitz, all

twist a system to suit their super-metaphysical minds. The latter has only eight subject-headings in his system. They are Theology, Jurisprudence, Medicine, Intellectual, Philosophy, Mathematics, History, Miscellaneous. Now, for instance, take the subject of the Divine Nature of Christ, upon which you wish to read. You go to a catalogue arranged under these eight headings, and you will find it under "Theology," but where under that head, which embraces nearly one-third of all books printed? Possibly you will find it under the "Lives of Christ," which is a subdivision of Christology, which is a subdivision of Soteriology, which is a subdivision of Systematic Theology, which is again a subdivision of Theology. You get at the list of books on the Divine Nature of Christ in that way; but you would never have found it had you not known about a System of Theology. The system of Brunet, carried out in his *Manuel du Libraire*, is little better, though often spoken of and referred to as a great work. He has but five headings: *Théologie, Jurisprudence, Sciences et Arts, Belles-Lettres, Histoire*. These five headings are run off into innumerable branches and subdivisions; but the classification can not be called a practical success. All librarians and bibliographers use the work; but few scholars and readers know any thing

about it, or could understand it without considerable study if they did know of it.

The fault, then, with these systems for practical use, is, that they are arranged according to the logical concatenation of their author's thought, and require a logician and bibliographer of corresponding abilities to understand them. It needs no elaboration to show the fault an irreparable one ; and I have only dwelt on these systems at some length, because there are many librarians and bibliographers of to-day who are using them, or others equally bad, in the American libraries.

The object of bibliographical catalogues of subjects, as I have before stated, is to help the reader to a knowledge of what books have been written on a given subject. Logical concatenation and systems of classification are impracticable and worthless. The average reader, instead of being a bibliographer and logician, is next door to a thorough dunce, and wishes nothing so much as simplicity, and the very simplest simplicity at that. Recognizing the importance of this, Mr. Noyes, in his *Catalogue of the Brooklyn Library*, has given us the best *practical* catalogue now extant. It is arranged on the principle of a dictionary, and embraces author, title, subject, and class. The only objection that can be raised to the work is, that

*classification* has been allowed at all. This objection is, however, obviated by a copious system of cross-reference. For instance: the subject of the theological Doctrine of Election will be found classed under "Biblical and Ecclesiastical Literature;" but under "Election," in the alphabetical order of the catalogue, will be found the reference, "*See* Biblical Literature, p. 80." Yet why should it be put under a class at all? The nearer a catalogue can be brought to resemble the most modern encyclopedia, or the most elaborate index of a commonplace book, the better and more practicable it will be. Why put Gems and Precious Stones under "Arts;" Zoölogy under "Natural History;" or Coal under "Geology."? If you went to an encyclopedia to look for those subjects, you would not look under the heads of "Art," "Natural History," or "Geology," but seek directly for your subject in its alphabetical place.

An index catalogue of authors, titles, and subjects, arranged in alphabetical order, in the simplest dictionary manner, with plenty of cross-references and duplicate entries, will make the best and most practicable catalogue for the use of readers and *habitués* of libraries, as has been abundantly proven by the instantaneous and sustained success of Mr. Noyes's *Catalogue of the Brooklyn Library*. This system of in-



dexes can not be used in arranging books upon the shelves of a library, because of the quantity of room required: but so long as a good catalogue is at hand, indicating the place where a book may be found in the library, it makes little difference about systematic arrangement on the shelves; and an arrangement of books by author, or even in the order of accession to the library, may be found quite as convenient. A commonplace book is the very reverse of system; but we do not mind the scattering of subjects when the index points out a subject to be found upon an enumerated page.

The reader who forms an *index rerum* of his individual knowledge for personal use, will find that a model taken after a modern encyclopedia, the index of a book, or a magazine index, will be of great service; and the value of a knowledge of bibliography and the formation of catalogues, with the manner of the use of those catalogues in a library, I will endeavor to explain in the succeeding and concluding chapter on "The Public Library, and How to Use it."

(b) The bibliographer's work is not merely the making of catalogues by author, title, subject, and class, giving the size, date, edition, and binding of a book, etc. His work goes beyond the cover and titlepage of a book, and extends to the pronouncing of a critical literary

judgment on its contents. It has been objected to this, that the bibliographer is usurping the functions of the critic ; that he oversteps the bounds of his profession ; that his work ceases at the titlepage, and the critic's begins. This objection would be sustainable did the bibliographer issue *original* criticism, — a thing which he does not do. There has been a misunderstanding about it, as there generally is in almost every dispute or discussion.

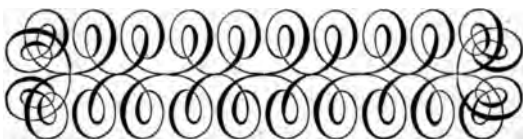
The bibliographer is a collator, not an originator, of criticism. He gathers criticism *pro* and *con* on a book very much as a judge takes the evidence in a case in court. On whatever side lies the preponderance of evidence, there he renders judgment.

From a collection of criticisms carefully examined, the bibliographer is competent to say whether a book is good, bad, or indifferent. He judges of a book by the evidence of critics ; and in a judicial capacity he supplies a much-needed want by holding the scales of justice with an impartial hand. One critic of great intellectual attainments crushes a book to earth ; and another critic of equal intellectual attainments picks it up, and places it in the heavens. The bibliographer balances the two extremes by holding the golden mean. As an example of this species of bibliography carried to a very



high degree of perfection, both in the industrious collocation of voluminous material and in fairness of judgment, as well as accuracy of statement, examine Allibone's *Dictionary of Authors*, which is also a dictionary of English and American literature.





## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, AND HOW TO USE IT.

"The great consulting-room of a wise man is a library." — DAWSON :  
*Address at Birmingham.*

"He hath no power that hath not power to use." — BAILEY : *Festus.*

SUPPOSE yourself in the presence of an army of fifty thousand men. Suppose that army on dress parade, each company, battalion, and regiment arranged in perfect order; each resembling the others in file and rank and in its individual men. Suppose you have come down many miles from home to see a brother who is one of these soldiers: how will you find him among these fifty thousand? The wrong way will be the one you will most naturally take: so we will watch you as you go down the long line of faces, looking eagerly into each for a sign of recognition. You pass from regiment to regiment, and a half-day passes you while you are looking for one man in fifty thousand. After several hours of useless search, you begin to wonder if it would not be a good idea to find

some one who knew something about the location of the army, and could direct you to the proper place. A staff-officer comes dashing by at this moment, and you hail him with an inquiry; but he has business of another nature, and only says, "Go to headquarters." This you do, and to the officer on duty you repeat your inquiry. Possibly he may know your brother personally, and can point his exact location. More probable that he does not know him; in which case he calls up the adjutant-general, and places the matter in his hands. He looks over some rolls and lists, upon which he finds your brother's name enrolled in Regiment —, Company —, New-York Volunteers. An orderly is summoned, who conducts you directly past regiment after regiment without looking at them. Presently he turns in, crosses a square, turns sharp down to the right, walks down the line to the ninth man, and there is your brother. In a moment you are happy by the accomplishment of your mission.

Now enter the library, and you stand in the presence of an army of fifty thousand books. Tier upon tier, and case upon case, they range themselves around you and above you, in ranks, battalions, and squares. Unlike an army, they are *always* on dress parade. They stand in companies and regiments of perfect line, dressed

alike, looking alike, speechless and immovable. You wish one book from the host, yet, knowing only its name, you know not where to find it. Will you do as the youth searching for his brother did? I suppose that you will, and so follow you as you go peering and nosing along from book to book, and from shelf to shelf. You find nothing that you want, and at last you begin to realize that your search is nearing a resemblance to the search for a needle in a haystack, when an assistant librarian passes the alcove, and you hail him, asking where such and such a book is; but he has not time to wait on you. He merely advises you to go to the librarian's desk, which advice you follow, and find yourself at the place where you should have gone at first. The librarian may wait on you in person, or he may summon an assistant. A consultation of catalogues takes place; and, if they are in the library, you soon stand in the presence of the books you wish to consult.

This may seem like the statement of an extreme case; but I venture the assertion, that, in those public libraries where the alcoves are open to visitors, three-quarters of all the readers will proceed to find a book in the manner above described. If such a person as a librarian is ever thought of at all, the imagination is after the popular conception; namely, a crusty old

blockhead, whose chief function is to carry a duster in one hand, and a huge bunch of brass keys in the other: in other words, a gentleman-janitor, whose knowledge of books consists in knowing only how to keep the dust off of them. Yet there never was a falser conception. A thorough librarian must be a combination of the trio, — bibliographe, bibliognoſte, and bibliophile; he must be the most generally and universally informed of men; he must know, in a general manner, as much of protoplasm as of creeds and confessions; he must know as much of the "black art" and Eleusinian mysteries as of Greek inscriptions and Egyptian papyri; he must know the subtle analyses in chemistry as well as those in metaphysics: in fact, he must have a superficial knowledge of all things, to answer the hundred different questions of a hundred different people asked him in a single day. He is used as an encyclopedia by every one; and, like most encyclopedias, he is never credited with the information given. Moreover, not content with asking him innumerable questions, people seek his advice on what to read, and get him to make out lists of books; so that you will readily understand that his influence is more extensive than is generally supposed. And yet he is a sadly unappreciated person. He works away his life and abilities in collect-

ing material for other people's use, and half the time he is not even thanked for his trouble. His head is a sort of public crib that every one feeds from, and rails at when it fails to supply the precise thing needed. The Greek poet Callimachus was the librarian of the Alexandrian Library, succeeding Zenodotus ; but he is known to us only through his elegiac verses. The world will never know or appreciate the quantity of thought and knowledge which he loaned to Aristophanes of Byzantium, Eratosthenes, Apollonius Rhodius, and a host of the less celebrated. The world never has appreciated, nor ever will, the labors of Brunet, Graesse, Panizzi, Brevoort, Allibone, Noyes, Spofford, and others of their class. It is hard to understand that these men have, in a great measure, molded the thought of their generation by the literature they have recommended for reading ; yet they certainly have : and the world is as sublimely unconscious of their influence as of their abilities and vast erudition. To the *habitué* of a public library I should say, by all means cultivate the good graces of the librarian. You will find him of inestimable value as a guide, philosopher, and friend ; and, if you can but get him to unlock the treasures of his mind, you will see such quantities of material in every conceivable branch of knowledge

as you have never dreamed of in your philosophy. By all means cultivate his acquaintance.

Upon your entrance to a public library, first learn the conditions of your entering. Find out the rules, and respect them, however severe and unjust they may appear; for remember, your coming is voluntary, and is permitted by the courtesy of those who have made the rules. Proceed at once to the librarian's desk; make known your wants, and they will generally be promptly supplied. It is not necessary, as a general thing, that you should know the arrangement and classification of the library upon the shelves. The public are usually excluded from the alcoves of most of our public libraries by a series of iron bars; and the handling of books on the shelves is the special work of the attendants in waiting: so that it is a matter of small importance to you where a book of geology is placed on the shelf, so long as it is obtained for you by an attendant.

It is, however, of the greatest importance that you should thoroughly understand the arrangement of the catalogues, which are always free of access to readers. You will not lose time by making a study of them: for a library is one great commonplace book of knowledge, which is utterly useless without an index; and the catalogue is that index. It is a divining-rod

in the hands of any one ; and they who use it correctly will certainly find the fountain-head of knowledge. Every well-regulated library has, or at least should have, catalogues arranged by author, title, and subject. In some libraries you will find these catalogues printed in book form ; but the printed catalogue is fast being superseded by the card catalogue, — an institution of modern invention, wherein the author, title, or subject of a work is recorded upon a small bristol-board card, instead of upon the page of a book. These cards, measuring about three inches by five inches, are sorted in alphabetical order, and arranged in shallow trays ; so that, in consulting them, the reader has but to turn the cards, instead of the leaves of a printed book catalogue. Almost every library that has a printed catalogue will also have a card catalogue ; and the reason of this is, that the printed catalogue, which may be complete to-day, will be rendered incomplete to-morrow by the accession of a thousand new volumes. In the case of print, an appendix must be started at once ; with cards it is only necessary to fill out blank ones, and slip them in their proper alphabetical place. If you wish for complete, recent, and thorough information about the books of the library, go to the card catalogue, and let the printed one alone.



The card catalogues of authors, of titles, and of subjects, may all be placed together in alphabetical order like an encyclopedia, or they may be kept separate. In either case, the first catalogue will enable you to tell what works of a certain author, which you may wish to consult, are in the library. The second catalogue gives you the title (excluding the article) of a work, when you may not know either the author or the subject, and refers you to the author, or, if anonymous or pseudonymous, states so. The third catalogue will give you all the works, or parts of works, that may be in the library, on any subject that you may wish to read upon. This last catalogue is of vastly more importance than the other two; for, though bibliographers and cataloguers study authors and titles very minutely, the reader is more generally a student of subjects. If you are reading up on the subject of Geology, select such books from the list of books on that subject in the subject catalogue as you may wish to look at, and then ask one of the librarians to get them for you. Do not, I beg of you, go into a library, as many, many readers do, and address an assistant librarian, asking for "some book on geology," leaving it to the assistant's laziness or ignorance to hand you down the first book that comes to hand. Find out for yourself what you want.

Brains were put into your head for use : so use them, and do not make unnecessary draughts on the information and brains of other people.

A subject catalogue is necessarily an incomplete affair, — not more than half a loaf of bread, but nevertheless much better than no bread at all. The analyzing of the contents of an individual book, and distributing it into many different subjects, is a thing few librarians have had the hardihood to undertake. The task is herculean. The accumulation and production of books is too enormous for minute analysis. Most of the library catalogues of subject are confined to the general subject of a book. Mr. Noyes,<sup>1</sup> and some few others, have gone beyond the titlepage ; but they are the exceptions. Still, even in a rough and general cataloguing, the same book, passing through the hands of different cataloguers in different libraries, will receive a pretty keen analysis ; for, where one of them passes over a subject, another one picks it up and records it. For instance : one cataloguer places Bulwer's *Zanoni* under "Novels : " another one discovers in it a valuable contribution to the literature of the Rosicrucians, and catalogues it under both heads. Again : the first cataloguer places D'Israeli's

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue of the Brooklyn Library*. By S. B. NOYES, Librarian. 3 vols. 1877-1880.

*Venetia* under "Novels;" and the second librarian places it under "Novels" and "Byroniana," because the character of *Lord Cadurcis* is a valuable and true pen-picture of Lord Byron. It is therefore very important that as many of the printed subject catalogues of libraries should be obtained as is possible. As bibliographical aids, they are of inestimable value; for from them the student can collate about all the literature extant on any subject. In the thorough running-down of a subject, bibliographies, catalogues, indexes, encyclopedias, dictionaries, commonplace books, books of quotation, and books of reference, must all be impressed into the service. These reference volumes of a public library are generally placed together in a conspicuous part of the library, and are open to the free use of all readers; thereby forming an exception to the hosts of the "cabined, cribbed, confined," upon the shelves.

And now, with these reference books upon one side, and the card catalogue upon the other, let us together seek for the literature of a given subject, that I may demonstrate in practice that which I have tried to explain in theory in the last few pages. You will perhaps think this an unnecessary labor; and many of you who know of the practice will think the matter too simple to need explanation: but I must again assure

you, that the wise men who enter a library are in the decided minority, and that the youthful reader wishes nothing so much as the explanation of what to the initiated seems simplicity's self. I will therefore take a simple subject in biography, and suppose you an admirer of Shelley (most young men are, and I have known old ones, too, who were). I will suppose you indignant at his critics and biographers, and that you contemplate writing a correct life of him. To do this, you must know all that has already been written of him ; and for that purpose you want every scrap of *Shelleyana* in the library. And right here it may be well to add, that, in studying any subject, you want at least to see and look over as much of the literature of that subject as possible, even if you do not care to read it. It gives you a superficial bird's-eye view that is of value in the classification of its branches. Should you rely upon your friends for information on the subject of "Shelley," they may refer you to a "Life," or an article in some magazine about him ; and, should you go to the librarian, he will probably do the same thing, for he has not time to deal with the subject as he could do. The proper reference is : encyclopedias and dictionaries first, and then catalogues and indexes. Let us proceed by ourselves to find out what has been written by him and

about him, and an assistant librarian will get the volumes as we call them off. We will suppose you have consulted the encyclopedias and dictionaries, and have a general idea of your subject. Turn first to the card catalogue of authors under "Shelley." You find various editions of his works recorded; and, selecting an edition in four volumes, you call for them, and they are brought. Turn to the card catalogue of subjects under "Shelley," "Shelleyana," and "Biography," and you find Stoddard's *Anecdote Biography of Shelley*, Medwin's *Life of Shelley*, and Symond's *Shelley*, with a further reference, "See Periodical Literature." This may be the extent of *Shelleyana* in the card catalogue: but a glance at a library of fifty thousand books tells you at once that there must be more Shelley literature in the library than is indicated in its catalogue; for Shelley was too celebrated a character not to be written about more extensively. Let us proceed to hunt up whatever else there may be, the three lives above mentioned being brought in the mean time. In Poole's *Index of Periodical Literature*, we find, under "Shelley," half a page of references to English and American magazines and reviews containing *critiques*, reviews, essays, papers, monographs, lives, characters, etc., of Shelley, by a score of different writers; and these are

all in the library, though not down in the card catalogue, because most catalogues can not go into such details without endless labors on the librarian's part. Here, then, on the start, is a host of material from the magazines ; but Poole's *Index* only dates down to 1853, and there has been a Shelley mania since then, and quantities of literature have been written about him : so we will take up Noyes's *Catalogue of the Brooklyn Library*. Under "Shelley" is a list of different editions of his works, which are perhaps not in this library ; but it also refers to the essays of Talfourd and Hutton, which are very likely to be here. If you are in doubt, turn to your card catalogue of authors under those names, and ascertain. They are here, and are ordered. There is also a reference to criticisms in periodicals, which are also run down ; and a further reference carries us to "Biography," p. 197, where we find enumerated periodical literature by the dozens of volumes. Here, also, are reference to works, and parts of works, that contain notices, lives, characteristics, estimates, etc., of Shelley. For instance : Kingsley's *Miscellanies*, De Quincey's *Essays on the Poets*, Bagehot's *Literary Studies*, Godwin, Howitt, Hunt, Masson, Peacock, — all have something to say of him in volumes chiefly devoted to other things. These works are all in the library, and are sought out.



This catalogue of Mr. Noyes contains half a page of *Shelleyana*: yet still, in the preparation of that catalogue, Mr. Noyes has overlooked some articles; and there are many, again, that never went through his hands, not being in the Brooklyn Library. Let us take up the *Catalogue of the Boston Public Library* and the *Catalogue of the Boston Athenæum*. Here is a page or more of *Shelleyana*, from which we select that which we have failed to secure in the other catalogues. Next take up the *Catalogue of the Library of Congress*, and collate once more; and do not stop until you have tried Allibone's *Dictionary of Authors*, where you again get some new material. Try the *Astor Library Catalogue*, and the *Bibliotheca Londinensis*. You may proceed in this way from catalogue to catalogue, impressing into the service encyclopedias, books of biography, dictionaries, magazine indexes, etc., taking something new from each, until you have entirely exhausted the subject. If you wish to begin the reading of *Shelleyana* after you have collated from the catalogues I have named above, you will have plenty of material at hand; for there will be a list of nearly a hundred volumes, embracing almost the entire bibliography of the subject. These volumes you can of course call for and obtain at your pleasure. You will remember the advice given

in the chapters on "How to Read;" and, in reading these volumes, be sure that you make a memorandum of any book, essay, or review that you find referred to in the pages or in foot-notes. For instance: in Symond's *Shelley*, on the first page, you will find a list of authorities quoted, from which you may collect some new material. Be sure, also, that you watch the foot-notes for authorities and references. Again: you will not find under "Shelleyana," in any of the catalogues, the "Lives" of Godwin, Byron, Hunt, Trelawney, etc.; and yet they will all of them devote some pages to Shelley, because he was intimately acquainted and associated with those characters. Again: you will not find in the catalogues, under "Shelleyana," D'Israeli's *Venetia*; yet it is referred to in some of the enumerated reviews that you will read, and for the reason that the character of *Marmion Herbert* is a representation of Shelley. All such works bear upon the subject, and are worth inspection at least.

Let me briefly take up one more subject, say, in Theology, where the reader wants the literature of the Doctrine of Repentance. Use the card catalogue first under "Repentance," and make a list of the authors. Then try McClintock and Strong's *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, and Schaff's *Encyclopedia*, and take



the reference to authorities in books, parts of books, or magazines, on that subject. Try other encyclopedias if necessary. Examine Malcom's *Theological Index*, and Hurst's *Bibliotheca Theologica*, where long lists will be found. Next use Pettingell's *Homiletical Index*, where you will find lists of sermons on the subject. Try Darling's *Cyclopedia*, Noyes's *Catalogue*, Poole's *Index*, and examine the indexes of *Princeton Review*, *Theological Review*, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, etc. In reading this material, you will find references to systems of theology by different authors, which you can look up; and so on, proceed in the accumulation of literature as in the former case.

Facility in handling these books of reference, and tracking the footprints of knowledge, is a matter of acquirement within every one's capabilities. Librarians are adepts at it; and, if you can get them to help you hunt up a subject, you will greatly benefit thereby. Unfortunately, you will generally find these librarians have not time to give you detailed aid; and your main dependence must be upon yourself and the catalogues. The reader can not fail to appreciate at once the great and vital importance of these books of reference. To the thorough reader they are indispensable; and, in the running-down of literature on any subject, the stu-

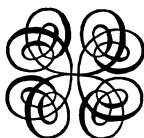
dent is utterly lost without them. They should be examined and studied with the greatest care and attention; for their importance is primary and absolute. They are eyes to the blind, and crutches to the lame. And yet, singularly enough, with all the importance of these reference volumes, few people, indeed, have any idea of their value. The mode of finding the literature on any subject, which I have endeavored to explain in this chapter, is well known to all librarians, and to many outside readers and students; but the great majority have very little comprehension of it: and this is the more singular, again, because the process is so simple, and would seem to suggest itself to almost any one.

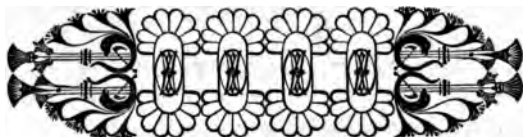
It will be a matter of satisfaction to every *habitué* of libraries to know that the making of indexes is increasing with the demand for them. Mr. Poole's *Index of Periodical Literature*, completed down to 1882, is now in press; and the Index Society of Great Britain has just finished its index of the Topographical works of England and Wales, and contemplates its extension to include the Topography of all Europe. This is but the beginning of its work; for they expect to take up Biography and History in a similar manner.

I have collected, in an appendix added here-

to, a list of the most important works of reference suitable for the general reader, and works that will be found in almost every library ; and in closing, I can only reiterate the advice already given, — to study them, *study them*, STUDY THEM ! for they are the guide-books of knowledge, and the “open sesame” of literature.

Before closing this chapter and book, let me refer back to my first chapter, and say again that this little book is but the diary of one person's experience, and that experience may be entirely different from yours. I simply give you the benefit of mine, that, by comparison with your own, you may be better able to judge which of us is right. If I am wrong, you can not choose but profit by my errors : if I am right, you must gain something by the confirmation of truth. In either case, your reading of these pages can not be utterly devoid of profit ; and, if I have made the stumbling-blocks of my experience the stepping-stones to your success, so much the better for you.





## APPENDIX.

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### LIST OF REFERENCE BOOKS.

ABBOTT: *Literature of Doctrine of Future Life.*

ADAMS: *Manual of Historical Literature.* Lists of histories of different countries, with collated criticism.

ALLEN: *American Biographical Dictionary.*

ADAMS: *Dictionary of English Literature.*

ALLIBONE: *Dictionary of Authors.* English and American authors, with short biographies and references.

*American Catalogue.* Compiled by J. E. Jones. Books printed in America down to 1882.

APPLETON'S *Library Manual.*

*Astor Library Catalogues.*

BANDINEL: *Classed Catalogue of Topography.*

BARTLETT'S *Literature of the Rebellion.*

*Bibliotheca Americana* (Sabin).

*Bibliotheca Londinensis.* Index to literature of England.

BLAKEY: *History of Political Literature.*

BOHN'S *Catalogues of Books.*

*Booksellers' Trade-Lists.*

*Boston Public Library Index and Catalogue.*

*Boston Athenæum Index and Catalogue* (Cutter).

*Bowdoin College Library Catalogue* (with index).

BRAY: *Bibliotheca Parochialis*. For ministers and pastors.

BRUNET: *Manuel du Libraire*.

*British Librarian*, by Oldys. Incomplete.

BRYDGE'S *British Bibliographer*.

*Catalogue of Philadelphia Mercantile Library*.

*Catalogue of Library of London Institution*.

*Catalogue of Brooklyn Library*.

*Catalogue of Library of Congress*.

*Catalogues of all State Libraries*.

*Catalogues of all College Libraries*.

CUTTER: *Catalogue of Harvard Library*.

DARLING: *Cyclopædia Bibliographica*. Of principal value for Latin and theological books.

DIBDIN: *Library Companion*.

DIDOT: *Catalogue Raisonné*.

EBERT: *Bibliographical Dictionary*.

*English Catalogue* (Sampson Low & Co.).

ERSCH: *Bibliographisches Handbuch*.

GRAESSE: *Trésor de Livres*.

HINRICHS: *Catalog* (1824-1882); For German books.

HURST'S *Bibliotheca Theologica*.

KAYSER'S *Bücher-Lexicon*. Recent German books.

KELT: *Elements of General Knowledge*.

KISTNER: *Buddha and his Doctrines*. Bibliography of Buddhism.

LOW: *Index to Current Literature*.

LOWNDES: *Bibliographers' Manual* (edited by Bohn). English books a specialty.

MCELHINNEY: *Doctrine of the Church* (with bibliography).

MALCOM: *Theological Index*.

NUTT: *Catalogue of Theological Books*

ORME: *Bibliotheca Biblica*.

PETTINGELL: *Homiletical Index*. Handbook of texts, themes, and authors.

PERKINS: *Best Reading*.

POOLE: *Index to Periodical Literature*.

PORTER: *Books and Reading*.

POTTER: *Handbook for Readers*.

*Publishers' Trade-List Annuals*.

*St. Louis Mercantile Library Catalogue*.

*Smith, English, & Co. Catalogues*.

SPURGEON: *Commenting and Commentaries* (with bibliography).

STEINSCHNEIDER: *Bibliographisches Handbuch*.

TRÜBNER'S *Bibliothecal Guide to American Literature*.

VINCENT: *Catalogue of Royal Institute, London*.

WARTON: *History of English Poetry*.

WATTS: *Bibliotheca Britannica*.

WHITAKER: *Reference Catalogues of Current Literature*.

WINER: *Handbuch der Theologischen Literatur*.

WHEATLEY'S *What is an Index?*

N.B. — To this list add all encyclopedias, dictionaries, and indexes of every kind, especially the indexes of magazines and reviews, such as, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, *Quarterlies*, *Edinburgh*, *Blackwood*, *Princeton*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Century*, etc.







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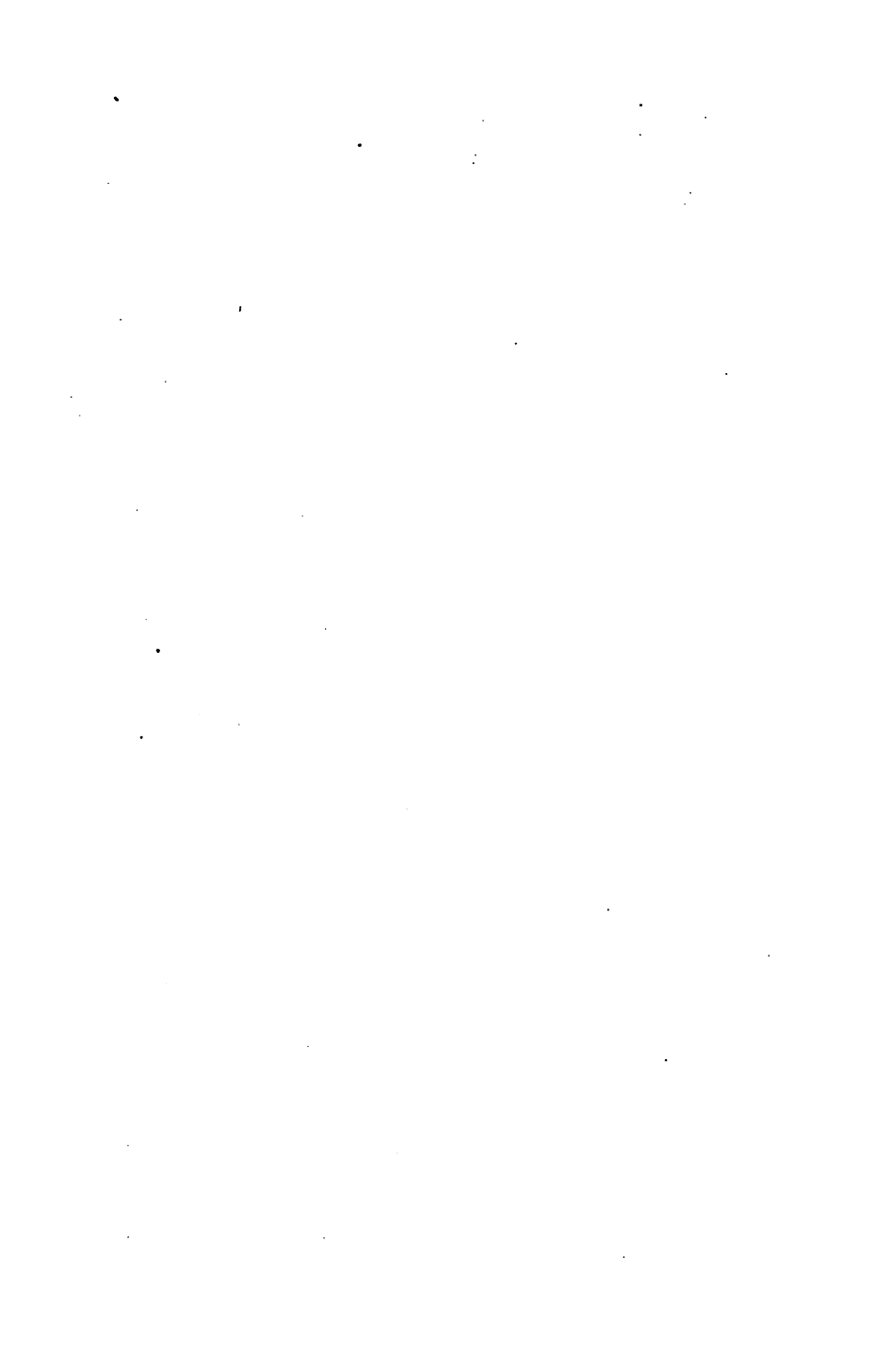
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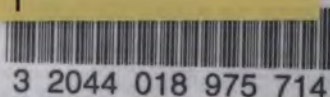
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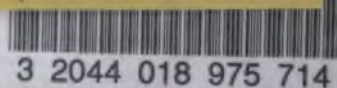
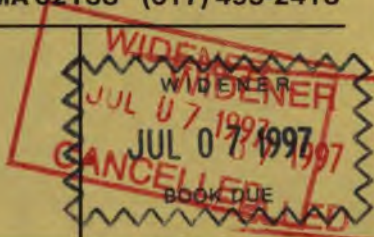
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